Spiritual director and physician

Viktor Raymond (Father.)

SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR AND PHYSICIAN

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THE SPIRITUAL TREATMENT OF SUFFERERS FROM NERVES AND SCRUPLES

FROM THE FRENCH OF

REV. FR. V. RAYMOND, O.P.

CHAPLAIN TO THE KNEIPP INSTITUTE AT WŒRISHOFEN (BAVARIA)

TRANSLATED BY

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PREFACE

TO THE FRENCH EDITION

Le Guide des Nerveux et des Scrupuleux. The title should secure success to this work—a work of actual interest, a valuable work. It is the result of experience, and this is not its least important quality. When I first met Father Raymond in Germany, he was in a most critical state of neurosis, and is consequently well able to understand the physical and moral torture which fills with despair those unfortunate people who are so affected. As soon as he had recovered, his charity impelled him to offer a helping hand to the same class of patients, whom he calls his dear friends, by pointing out to them the system they should follow in order to counteract the evil at its source.

Father Raymond was well equipped for his work, inasmuch as he speaks several languages, and in an experience of fifteen years he has been called upon to receive the confidence of thousands of nervous patients coming from various parts of the globe to Wœrishofen, which owes its celebrity to the name and work of Father Kneipp. Every day his store of knowledge was enriched by some new phase of distinct character, for neurosis is of such

a nature that almost every case is different. Hence it is not surprising that his work, besides possessing the merit of being written in a sober, clear, and precise style, and illustrated by many quotations from ancient and modern authors, from the Holy Scriptures and Doctors of the Church, describes various aspects of neurosis in both an exact and a striking manner. The author sets out with a consideration on suffering, in some degree inevitable for all. Even here—if one knows how to read between the lines—it is clear that the writer understands perfectly the great moral cause of neurosis—namely, ignorance of the laws which govern human destiny. Parents are the first offenders in this respect, by making it a principle for themselves that they must spare the child even the slightest pain. The softness of modern training often stifles all individual initiative. Later on, in the school which knows little of God, the child is well instructed as to his *rights*, whilst his *duties* are lightly passed over. He is taught to use all means to attain to worldly happiness, and learns that all actions that conduce to this are truly good. A materialistic philosophy will teach him that man is all-sufficient for himself, and should look to no other guide than his reason. The result is that the youth of twenty is puffed out with pride like an inflated balloon that will not stand the slightest pricking. But he does not go far without encountering the prickings of deceptions and contradictions of every kind. The man whose will is not firmly set on the solid basis of faith will easily fall a victim to some form of neurosis, and all the more easily if he is already weakened, either

by heredity or by the way in which he has been brought up.

Father Raymond describes for us the unfortunate nerve-sufferer—sometimes dejected and sometimes elated, a prey to the agonizing terrors of lack of will-power and of fear, and all the more discouraged as he finds that he is generally regarded as a victim of his own imaginings. The writer's description is excellent, perhaps a little too brief where he treats of obsessions, but still quite sufficient to let the patients see that their pains are understood and appreciated. And is not this the first step towards easing them?

The chapter on hysteria is well documented, and gratitude is due to the author for his treatment, because the subject is still very complicated. More than sixty different definitions of hysteria are advanced, and we have not yet come to the end of them. Father Raymond knows the hysterical patient by experience rather than by definition, and he is able to determine his character by actual facts. Inconstancy, egotism, untruthfulness, must give way to suggestion, which is only lightly touched upon. But it must be borne in mind that the author had no intention of producing a merely learned treatise. Those who have to deal with patients should follow out his advice to the letter. The saying of the Latin poet may well be applied to him:

"Homo sum humani nihil a me alienum puto" (I am human, and nothing human do I consider foreign to me).

The charity and experience of the priest, together

with the ability of a psychologist, are conspicuous in the study of scruples and the scrupulous. Sufferers under this affliction are but seldom understood by medical men, and do not always receive the enlightened counsel of which they stand so much in need. Directors of conscience are under an obligation to study the question of scruples, or they expose themselves, by lack of sufficient knowledge, to make mistakes of which even the least is of enormous consequence, when it is remembered that their chief rôle is to convey peace of conscience. The conscience of the scrupulous is tormented by *doubt* and *fear*, and this fear is increased tenfold when the danger of sacrilege or some terrible punishment is held as a menace over them. Father Raymond is well acquainted with this evil, and he insists with emphasis on the genuine remedy—confidence. In effect this is the saving balm that heals such wounds. The patient must acquire confidence in Divine providence, in his physician and his Director, and then also, with a new idea of his own powers, he must learn confidence in himself. Confidence will lead him to obey, and obedience is the only efficacious means of cure. I myself always follow this procedure, and in so doing I must say I have obtained some remarkable results, of which I may mention two recent cases of Protestants, of whom one was a victim of religious mania (*folie mystique*), and the other was intensely scrupulous.

The chapters that follow are of as deep an interest as the others. They treat of the great problem of human destiny, and give evidence of

the author's profound knowledge of the human heart, and of his ardent zeal for the good of his neighbour. The "Guide" will be read with profit both by the sick and by the healthy. It will also be most useful to directors of conscience, and even to medical men, because it contains counsels of undoubted excellence, put forward with great breadth of view and perfect tolerance. Thus a former professor of theology at Cologne could say: "The perusal of this work is of international interest, and is proof of the author's experience, prudence, and charity." A Protestant said to me one day: "I salute that religious every time I meet him, because I cannot but feel respect for the man who has written such a book." Whatever be the reader's religion, he must gather from this book the great benefit of an increase of calm and hope.

He will learn to look to the future life and take courage, with tranquillity in his soul and new strength in his will.

I conclude this brief sketch by expressing to the author my hope that this new edition may be as speedily exhausted as the preceding, and this includes also a good wish to his readers.

DR. A. MASQUIN.

INSTITUT NEUROTHÉRAPEUTIQUE DE ST. DIDIER,
VAUCLUSE,
May 10, 1909.

LETTER OF DR. BONNAYMÉ

No one rejoices more than I at the success of your book, to the production of which I encouraged you as much as I could. Our friendship at the same time moves me to add my congratulations to those of your eminent critics. The true worth of both substance and form, and your tone of sincerity and kindness throughout, quite justify the very favourable judgments that have been pronounced upon it. You tell me I had the gift of prophecy when I foresaw your success, and you were unwilling to believe it. But your experience and knowledge were too well known to me to admit of any doubt as to the result. Besides, I knew that, as a linguist, you have been able to study neurosis in persons of various nationalities, amongst which our civilization spreads this disease more and more.

We have often exchanged thoughts on these subjects and on the various affections that afflict our age. You will remember our philosophical talks in the lovely woods or charming meadows around Wœrishofen. . . . Then I recollect that I have often seen patients coming away cheerful from a visit to your room in the old monastery. In these pages I find you, as I have always known you, kind and sympathetic. Your book is the work of a safe

and experienced director of souls. It also has its scientific value, and medical men have been surprised at your publication. You did not expect that your book would attract their attention, as your chief object was to be of service to the sick. But notice has been taken of it because it treats of new aspects of a subject which is not by any means commonplace. You here express the thoughts of many medical men—I might say of all—who study their patients thoroughly—namely, that in these matters the psychological aspect is of the highest importance, and, I venture to say, essential to success in treatment. The contempt of this doctrine has been responsible for many failures, of which nervous patients have rightly complained when they found that various medicines have done them no good whatever. The excellence of your book consists in the fact that you indicate the claims to consideration of that interior world to which our thoughts, sentiments, and volition belong, and which governs the external. . . .

You here propose to the modern sceptic a new remedy for the nervous disorders which are the outcome of our extremes of civilization. The remedy is the simplicity of mind, of which the Gospel speaks, and that faith which is a lever of such extraordinary power. There is no doubting the happy results that these means have effected. You place before the nervous patient that Divine goodness which wills the salvation of all men, and which offers an increase of aid in proportion to the danger incurred. For in the time of depression, which none can totally avoid, the best support is

the hope of that better life which can be obtained through these trials. The apprehension of an attainable good inspires the faculties with immensely increased energy, whilst the fear of evil has the opposite effect, disturbs the whole mental system, and especially injures the will.

You regard these patients as labouring under errors, and therefore deserving of all pity. Especially is this true in the case of the scrupulous, who have an entirely false idea of religion. Your chapters touching this subject are a masterpiece of observation and analysis. . . .

All phases of nerve trouble have been examined. . . . Whilst indicating the means of treating these affections, it was but right that you should insist upon the union of effort on the part of priest and doctor. . . .

Psychotherapy has been amply vindicated as a separate study. And when it is considered how many qualities are needed to direct nerve patients, it would seem that we must infer that few persons are capable of succeeding well with it. All the qualities of the deep thinker and of the skilful physician are here brought into play. Sound judgment, method, ingenuity, and knowledge, are all required in a high degree. On the other hand, these cases call for tact, kindness, and industry, devotedness, friendliness, and much patience, and that peculiar gift by which one is able to understand the patient and gain his confidence. In all this there is no better preparation than to have experienced the trouble oneself, for that confers naturally the tone of sincerity, of solicitude, and tenderness

towards one's fellow-sufferers. And in this respect, dear reverend Father, you have an advantage over many others. . . .

If I might hazard an hypothesis on the nature of neurosis, I would say that perhaps that magnetic or psychical force which I have studied in my last work plays here an important part. In any case, it is beyond all doubt that the moral part of our nature is, as it were, the conducting-wire—the only essential agent in dealing with cases of this class. That idea of good which shines forth at the highest point of the psychical world explains and influences all the phenomena of that world. It is certain that the will which is kept in conformity with the laws of this goodness can never go astray. I believe myself that the practice of true psychotherapy consists, first, in the breaking down of egotism, and this may be difficult, inasmuch as this egotism is often screened by brilliant talents and defended by subtle reasonings; then, secondly, in teaching the patient how to become more virtuous, and instructing him how to pray. . . .

DOCTEUR BONNAYMÉ.
(*Specialist in maladies of nerves and stomach.*)

AVENUE FÉLIX-FAURE, 190,
LYON,
May 24, 1909.

LETTER OF DR. DUBOIS

SIR,

The reading of your interesting work has given me much pleasure. You know that we start from quite different standpoints—you a religious of the Order of St. Dominic, and I a freethinker, brought up in Protestantism. But in spite of this fundamental difference, I often find myself more in agreement with religious persons than with those non-thinking people who wrongly style themselves freethinkers. I shall make a point of placing your book in the hands of those of my patients who suffer from scruples, however little religious faith they may have, and you will be an aid to me in my work.

I hope you will soon bring out a French edition, as the majority of my patients are French, and I beg of you to let me know as soon as the work appears, etc.

PROFESSOR DUBOIS.

(*Professor of Neuropathics in the University of Berne.*)

BERNE,
July 28, 1907.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

"If I lie down to sleep, I shall say: When shall I arise? and again I shall look for the evening, and shall be filled with sorrows even till darkness."—JOB vii. 4.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."—MATT. v. 5.

NEARLY all theologians, preachers, and ascetical writers, have dealt with the subject of suffering, and numerous and able works are already available upon this inexhaustible theme. The present writer would not have attempted to add to these did he not feel that there is still a special and practical aspect of the matter which has not been sufficiently worked out, and which yet is of very real interest to a certain class of sufferers. At the same time this is only intended for a simple, practical guide, to be easily brought within the reach of all, and not an exhaustive treatise on a very complex question. A good deal had to be said here on suffering in general, on account of the nature of the matter in hand.

Throughout these pages the only object has been to offer some help to a class of sufferers who are sadly in need of it, and are the less likely to obtain it, because they so often bear no external sign that would distinguish them from the healthiest.

The nature and consequences of nervous afflic-

tions have been dwelt upon at some length, in order that our readers may recognize that the advice is not put forward without a knowledge of their ailments. In this way it is hoped that confidence may be aroused in the remedies proposed.

If this work, which lays no claim to literary or scientific worth, shall prove to be of any service in aiding and comforting a single patient, it must be attributed to those many other patients who have honoured the writer with their confidence, and urged him to publish these pages; for, in effect, these pages are but the outcome of the interviews that the writer has had with numbers of patients during long years spent in this cosmopolitan institute. And here the author is pleased to find an opportunity of expressing his deep respect for the founder, Monsignor Kneipp, whose name is known throughout the world, and who, whilst being as a zealous priest a close imitator of his Divine Master, was also by his work a benefactor to the human race.

It may be claimed that the work is based on a long experience obtained by personal suffering and the observation of numerous other patients. Besides this, the author founds his doctrine on theology, on the teaching of Saints and masters of the spiritual life, and also on the best principles of the most recent medical works which treat of these subjects.

In the hope that some sufferers may be benefited, the author humbly lays this his work at the feet of that noblest of God's creatures who has suffered more than all, and best understands the mystery of the Cross. She whom the Church in this " vale

of tears" invokes as "Mother of Sorrows," and "Queen of Martyrs," is well able to feel for us and succour us. Hence with the greatest confidence we may ask the "Consoler of the Afflicted," the "Health of the Sick," to have compassion upon us, pray for us, and to help us to carry our cross and turn our trials to merit. Moved by our prayers, may she obtain for us that we may celebrate with her and all lovers of the Cross, throughout eternity, the triumphs of the Cross of her Son and the "infinite mercies of the Lord," and sing that canticle which the choirs of angels may not sing, but is reserved to them that have borne their trials with patience.

The author would take advantage of this new edition to answer some remarks that have been made regarding his work.

1. It has been said that the question of personal responsibility has been omitted, and thereby the scientific value of the book diminished.

This matter was designedly left aside. It is a problem that is calculated to embarrass the best equipped and most balanced minds, whereas these pages must be of such a nature that they can be safely placed in the hands of persons who are nervous and scrupulous, and whose imaginations are beyond all control. Being victims of fear, they are liable to see and retain whatever is likely to trouble them. Place before them any theory regarding responsibility, and they would only be impressed by the thought of the obligations and their serious consequences. The cases which exempt from responsibility would escape their notice altogether. The effect would be very similar to

that produced by a mission or retreat, when the sermons or instructions on the Four Last Things will strike their imaginations in such a manner as to leave no room for anything else, and the only result is an aggravation of their trouble. For the same reason it is here laid down that patients should not read books of moral theology or of medicine. On the other hand, it has been the aim of the author to speak in these pages in the clearest and simplest manner, and to say nothing which could in any way trouble the mind.

2. It has been objected that the book contains too many quotations.

The answer to this is again that the book is—in part, at least—addressed to patients who have in many instances lost confidence in both director and doctor. Whilst giving the fruit of his own experience, the author has thought it well, and even needful, to throw in all the weight of the teaching of Saints and experts whose authority is beyond dispute.

3. It has been pointed out that some considerations, at times drawn out to some length, have no direct bearing on the subject in hand.

The necessity for this arises from the fact that so many persons are found deficient in the knowledge of certain simple truths which lie at the very basis of a faithful fulfilment of their duty. For instance, it is useless to speak of resisting temptation to one who has not clearly grasped the distinction between a temptation and a sin. Or, again, it is hopeless to deal with the defects of prayer while the nature and qualities of prayer are but vaguely understood.

To brace up the courage of our patients no better means can be applied than insistence on the value of suffering, and on the relation of this empty and transitory life to a future. The same remark applies to the notes which have been frequently introduced throughout the work.

FR. V. RAYMOND.

WŒRISHOFEN (BAVARIA),
May 1, 1909.

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SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR AND PHYSICIAN

PART I

INTRODUCTION

ON SUFFERING

As early as the second century of our era Galen declared that the eye alone was subject to one hundred and twelve maladies. Pliny reckoned three hundred ills that wage war against man without truce or pity, tending to fetter him in his natural functions, to derange or ruin the faculties and forces that he has received from his Creator.

Doctors, moralists, and ascetical students together would never succeed in counting or classifying all the evils and pains of the moral and physical orders. The trials that are visited upon the human race and that are the natural accompaniment of the individual in his course towards his eternal destiny from the cradle to the grave defy computation. "Man born of a woman," says Holy Scripture, "living for a short time, is filled with many miseries."[1]

With the advance of medical science human afflictions appear in fresh complexity. They multiply

[1] Job xiv. 1.

in proportion as man wanders from the normal conditions of life, as he creates new needs for himself, and seeks to substitute for the morality of the Gospel that which is termed the "morality of nature," leading little by little, but infallibly, in the end to paganism, with all its shame.

To form an idea of the extent of these ailments, we need only glance at the number of our hospitals, asylums, and prisons, or run through a catalogue of works on medicine. The publications that treat of one affliction alone—so recent in its development as to be termed a "modern malady"—would suffice to fill a library. We refer to the subject we are treating in these pages.

We all know that suffering always has existed, and will continue to exist. The madman and the infidel alone are so devoid of sense as to hope to escape from it, or to blame as the cause of it God, or their surroundings, or society, which makes too great demands upon its members. If this method of facing the problem of pain seems to them to be more advantageous or less humiliating, it cannot be regarded as logical or worthy of the man who is not altogether a reprobate or a fool.

"Look around you," says Blanc de Saint-Bonnet, "for an empire that is more firmly established than that of Pain. Man has destroyed many things: he has put an end to powerful kingdoms; he has overthrown some far-reaching laws; but he has achieved nothing against the reign of suffering. For six thousand years he has done all he knows to evade its thraldom. He has lived in the various ages; he has exchanged various regions; he has gone through

various periods of civilization. Through it all there is evidence of his weeping, and weeping is still the surest tribute he has to offer to the future."[1] Père Lacordaire had spoken in a similar strain: "As during the past six thousand years a certain amount of rain falls each year from heaven, just as surely has humanity produced its regular flow of tears. Man has tried every means to evade this law. He has passed through every stage from extreme barbarism to the extreme of civilization; he has lived beneath sceptres of every form and weight, but everywhere and at all times he has been subject to sorrow. When we read attentively, we find that pain is the first and last word in his history."[2]

Such, then, is the lot that every man is born to. It is true he has no faculty of choice between health and sickness, joy and sorrow. But he does choose between good and evil. It lies with him to give ear to the voice of his God, inviting him to follow Him, carrying His Cross;[3] or to the voice of Satan, who shows him all the goods of this world, and says: "All these will I give thee, if falling down, thou wilt adore me."[4]

God has fixed His own plans for each individual; He has established the means whereby we are to reach the end for which we were made. Some He endows with a strong constitution, a perfect health fitting them to cope with painful labour, and to resist all fatigue, so that they rarely feel the weight

[1] *La Douleur*, chap. xxviii. Maison de la Bonne Presse, Paris.

[2] *Œuvres de P. Lacordaire*, t. iii., p. 366. Paris, Ve Ch. Poussielgue.

[3] Matt. xvi. 24.
[4] *Ibid.*, iv. 9.

of the cross. God withholds such gifts from others, and leaves them a large share of suffering. The former must utilize their energy in God's service, and expend their vigour in an active life, in good works, in labours that never could be undertaken except with that strength and health which they enjoy. The others must only accept willingly that harder, simpler, lowlier life of which they are capable. It will be more hidden from view, but none the less precious in God's sight, as being similar to that which He chose for Himself, and which He requires of His saints, His best friends. The essential condition of life is to carry out contentedly the service compatible with the kind of life in which the Creator has placed us. The Apostle St. James tells us that "patience hath a perfect work."[1]

Even the strongest are well aware that they cannot entirely free themselves from suffering, though it may not reach all in an equal degree. We must renounce all hope of attaining perfect happiness here, and prepare ourselves to undergo the fatal consequences of the sin of our first parents. "The happiness of this world," says Bossuet, "is made up of so many portions that one or other is always lacking to us." And besides, whatever may be our condition, "our days will always be few and evil";[2] and life, long or short, must always be a term of probation. "What is long life," says St. Austin, "but the undergoing of a long trial?"

Louis of Grenada exclaims: "How many a change man experiences in soul as well as in body! Job might well conclude the recital of all his woes with

[1] James i. 4. [2] Gen. xlvii. 9.

the words 'Man never continueth in the same state.'[1] There are the alterations wrought merely by age: you observe the characteristics of a person to-day, and fifteen years hence you hardly recognize the same individual. There is no need to enter upon a catalogue of the sicknesses, disappointments, afflictions, cares—all the emotions of every kind through which we pass. In a lifetime sadness is ever mingled with joy, sorrow ordinarily follows close upon happiness, and often the end of one trial is only the beginning of a fresh one."[2]

What, then, is there that will furnish us with a right understanding of this life of suffering and guide us in the way of rendering all meritorious? Can we appeal to philosophy, science, some system of natural morality, or to any human source of solace? No consolation derived from such sources can ever be expected to redress the evils that afflict us. They would never be more than an illusion, often ending, as experience proves, in deception, despair, and at times in suicide. "The number of suicides," Coppée writes, "is constantly on the increase; on all sides we may hear the cry of despair. To thinking men it seems that the terror of living was never more manifest than at the present day."[3] Therefore we must look elsewhere for the remedy. The Gospel alone is capable of supplying the necessary consolations of life and the forces required by every soul that suffers, and this it effects by giving us truth.

[1] Job xiv. 2.
[2] Second Sermon for the Sunday in the Oct. of the Epiphany.
[3] *La Bonne Souffrance*, chap. ix. Paris, Lemerre.

"Faith alone," says the Abbé Seytre, "offers any real explanation of pain. Faith alone holds the secret of tempering its bitterness and making it bearable with resignation and love. Faith effects this by showing the reason of pain in its first principle, by discovering the intimate connection of pain with our deepest needs, and by directing our view to the happiness that is merited for a future life."[1]

In point of fact the Gospel indicates suffering as the ordinary and sure way towards heaven. Cardinal Goosens has expressed this well in one of his pastoral letters: "The life of Christ, as traced out for us in the Gospel story, was one long cross and martyrdom. No species of pain was spared Him. He burned with the desire to suffer. Nothing more should be needed to make us bless the pains that are sent us, receive them with gladness, or at least with resignation, for by them we bear the character of our Saviour stamped upon us. Associated through them with His humiliations here below, we obtain the right to hope for a share of His glory later on."[2]

We are the handiwork of God, whether in health or in sickness. All His works, we are taught, are perfect, considering all circumstances surrounding them. According to St. Basil, we ought to be thoroughly penetrated with the thought that we are the creation of Him Whose work is always good; that He distributes to us all things, weal or woe,

[1] *La Sainteté dans la Souffrance*, Préliminaires, chap. i. Paris, Lecoffre.

[2] *Lettre Pastorale sur la Douleur*.

with so wise a providence that nothing can happen to us against His will. "Great are the works of the Lord," says Holy Writ, "sought out according to all His wills."[1] In the just proportion between the means and the end ordained by God His wisdom especially shines forth. "She reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly."[2]

Trials, then, are only a preparation for another and a higher state. They serve to make us realize the instability of this world's belongings, whilst they prepare us to receive the graces that perfect and sanctify us. They are never sent to us except for God's glory and our sanctification. They dispose a soul for special lights, if only the soul knows how to submit and welcome the visit of the Cross, as the saints and the faithful of good disposition endeavour to do.

We may well credit that great servant of God who said: "In order to stamp the seal upon the wax, we must render the wax soft in our fingers or before the fire. Just so, that the soul may be distinctly marked with the seal of God, enriched with His graces, and adorned with virtue, it is necessary that it first be prepared by illness and afflictions, which soften the soul and reduce it to the state necessary for receiving the Divine impressions. In the early Church God brought about this admirable effect in the faithful by the persecutions of tyrants and the cruel tortures which they inflicted. In our times He works the same result in the souls of

[1] Ps. cx. 2.
[2] Wisd. viii. 1. P. de Lehen, S.J., *La Voix de la Paix Intérieure*, chap. i. Paris, Haton.

His elect by means of infirmities and tribulations which take the place of persecutions for us, and shape the likeness and characteristics of God's goodness in our hearts. Consequently we must be very careful to accept willingly and embrace with thankfulness the ills of body or of mind that God sends us. We must thank Him for all these visitations, and so they will prove as fruitful to us as another martyrdom."[1]

"Affliction," writes Blanc de Saint-Bonnet, "renders some families most remarkable, and is the formative power producing those much-revered persons who become a treasure to all around them. It appears that sorrow is the source of all depth of character and of mind. It endows human sentiments with a reality that even love never could effect. There is nothing like affliction to put all frivolity to flight, to stifle indifference, and to give real worth to every emotion of the heart. Do not confide too much in those that have not known suffering."[2]

The value of suffering did not escape the notice of the ancients. "There is no less greatness in suffering great evils," says Titus Livius, "than in doing great things." Cicero remarks: "It is a great misfortune not to have experienced trials." Æschylus maintained that "in suffering is knowledge"; and Seneca believed that "the bed of sickness provided an opportunity for the exercise of courage as well as the field of battle."

The true Christian, one who really merits the name, ought never to give way to discouragement,

[1] *S. Diodochus*, chap. xciv. [2] *Op. cit.*, chap. iv.

though he feel himself charged with a cross even more appalling than that of which we are going to speak.[1]

In this school of the Cross let him give docile attention to the voice and teaching of Him Who sends it, and let him wait with patience and trust for the time of deliverance and the undying reward that will certainly follow.

We should be happy indeed if in the following pages we could instil this trust into those who are suffering, and at the same time inspire those whom suffering seems to spare to extend a helping hand in sympathy to them that are in affliction. Both may learn to know, and to assist in remedying,

[1] If the days of persecution in which men were called upon to shed their blood are passed, another era of persecution no less formidable has opened. A shameless Press at the disposal of the enemies of the Church continually pours out a stream of lying, impiety, and blasphemy, and that with satanical hypocrisy and energy, and these evils are all the more deplorable because no resistance is offered by those whose duty it is and who have the means to undertake the struggle. It is the life of the soul that is attacked by this persecution.

It may well be believed that God punishes the crimes of an evil Press by choosing for Himself victims of a fresh kind—making martyrs of them by allowing them to be afflicted by that malady of which these pages treat.

God has often claimed pure and innocent victims to expiate the sins and crimes that are committed in secret or in our perverted modern Society. Is it not in great part to atone for all this shame that the members of the severe Orders—the Carthusians, the Trappists, the Carmelites, and others—pray, suffer, and endure mortifications that astonish us, while perhaps they excite only the ridicule of the wicked and worldly? *Cf. Le Péril Réligieux*, par le P. Weiss, O.P.: Paris, Lethielleux, 1907; *Les Malfaiteurs Littéraires*, by the Abbé Cormet: Paris, V. Retaux; *Un Fléau plus Redoutable que la Guerre, la Peste, la Famine*, by Chauvine A. Lémann: Lyon, E. Vitte, 1908.

as far as may be, this new form of ailment. It is hoped that the advice here offered may be of real spiritual profit to those who are already afflicted, and make them feel that their suffering serves to make them understand and to sanctify the most sorely tried life, and at the end to look forward, if not with joy, at all events with serenity, to the approach of death.

CHAPTER I

ON NEUROSIS

"GREAT labour is created for all men, and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam, from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb until the day of their burial into the mother of all."[1]

These words of Ecclesiasticus, so true of all men in all ages, seem specially chosen to indicate those nervous ailments which are of almost infinite variety by reason of their forms and the various subjects affected—ailments that often surpass actual bodily sufferings in intensity, as the spirit is more perfect than matter.[2]

Nervous maladies have occupied the attention of medical men from remote antiquity, but the term *neurosis* was first employed in the eighteenth century by the Scotch doctor, Cullen. He substituted it for such expressions as the "vapours" and "vaporous affections," which were previously applied to the symptoms of neurosis. The disease was for a long period considered to be beyond all ordinary treatment. In 1851 Sandras published his *Traité des Neuroses,* and introduced a new idea

[1] Ecclus. xl. 1.

[2] "The greatest sufferings are those of the moral order." —Dr. Dubois. *Cf.* St. Thomas, i. 2, *q.* 31, *a.* 5; *q.* 35, *a.* 6; *q.* 37, *a.* 1 and 3; 2, 2, *q.* 180, *a.* 7; 3rd pt., *q.* 46, *a.* 6.

into his definition—namely, the absence of any organic injury. Huchard and Axenfeld (1883) give a good description of neurasthenia, but without throwing any additional light on the subject. Then psychologists began to study the matter, and to find that neuropathic disturbances are connected with mental phenomena. All such disturbances, they point out, become more simple and are more easily grouped together when they are studied in their mental aspect rather than in the physical. Berheim and his followers add weight to this idea by showing that neurotic persons are subject to psychical troubles, and especially to such as arise from "suggestion." His view is, however, somewhat an exaggerated one. P. Janet in 1889 designates all these affections as "psychological maladies."[1] German specialists treat the subject under the term "psychoneurosis," and group together under this designation a host of other affections, like hypochondria, melancholia, and certain states of mental weakness that are clearly defined as cases of insanity by other doctors. Hence the name "psychoneurosis" rather adds to the confusion, because nervous troubles are not entirely psychical, and a respectable number of authors refuse to regard them as mental maladies. It would seem much easier to square the idea of Dr. A. Deschamps with observed facts. He sees in all these ailments a disturbance of vital energy. Vital energy, he says, "consists of a constant movement of assimilation and resolution, of numerous physico-chemical operations, in which all

[1] *L'Automatisme Psychologique*, 5e ed. Paris, Alcan.

the organs are continually at work; it consists of operations whereby the alimentary energy is set free and *internal* forces are produced."[1] Other authors agree that neurasthenia is the result of a kind of intoxication produced by a lack of tone in the digestive system.

From these few theories—and there are many others, which space will not allow us to mention—something may be gathered regarding the many causes and many kinds of neurasthenia, and with how much care it must be treated. Even the accepted term, "neurasthenia," can hardly be considered as satisfactory. It can only apply to a certain group of observable facts, the nervous system being the means of transforming and conducting vital energy. Professor Raymond has laid great stress on this consideration, and pointed out that neurasthenia is not one disease, but merely a group of symptoms that severally are common to various diseases. Like P. Janet, he distinguishes psychasthenia (mental weakness) from neurasthenia, and attributes to the former several affections, or rather symptoms, as obsessions, excessive fear (phobia), etc. The description of neurasthenia given by Dr. Beard, the American, in 1880, has had considerable vogue, and is still very much in favour. In this description the doctor identifies a number of affections, all well distinguished, but yet connected with one and the same malady—spinal irritation, protean neuralgia, *nervosisme*, cerebro-cardiac neuropathy. Further, Dr. Beard often dispensed with a precise diagnosis, and established

[1] *Les Maladies de l'Energie*, chap. i. Paris, Alcan, 1908.

a sort of common treatment for all patients. The method must be regarded as insufficient, though it is still employed at the present time.

After considering the nature of the evil, we will go back to the source of it, as being the best means to combat it successfully. According to Professor J. Grasset,[1] the causes of neurosis come from heredity, environment, and from the subject himself. Heredity may transmit neurosis directly or indirectly. Indirectly it acts through alcoholism, tuberculosis, the moral state or arthritic condition of the progenitors.

Environment acts by contagion. "Neurotic persons make those around them neurotic," says Grasset. This factor is of capital importance in the development of hysteria.

The causes existing in the patient spring chiefly from temperament and character, from excess, from education and overwork, from the mode of living, from the emotions and passions, from previous illness, infection, excessive use of alcohol or drugs, etc.

Education must always play an important part in this matter, and it is for parents to make great account of it and supervise it carefully. Educational training should be neither too weak nor too severe, and it should be conducted with due regard

[1] J. Grasset, *Thérapeutique des Maladies du Système Nerveux*. Paris, Doin, 1907. "If Duclaux was able to say that heredity is, generally speaking, 'the great force that rules the world,' and if since the time of Jeremias it has ever been said that 'the fathers have eaten a sour grape and the teeth of the children are set on edge,' the statement is all the more true when applied to nervous heredity" (*ibid.*, chap. ii.).

to the character of the child whose moral energy is to be strengthened and personal initiative to be developed. Only in that way can one hope to enter later upon life with the nervous system furnished with the needful power of resistance, and ready for the struggle to be encountered.

How ought education to be understood? Very often, in order to free themselves of their children parents hand them over to strange masters almost as soon as they are able to walk alone. Those masters, however competent and devoted they may be, can never replace the influence of the family: at most they can only supplement it. There is an enormous difference between the life of children in those barracks called "boarding-schools" and the life in the family. The mission that parents have received from God is not limited to bringing children into the world and then throwing the burden of their education upon strangers. No one can fill the position of a mother, whose place is in the home, not at the theatre or society gatherings, or even at the University. Then, besides, how many masters have little care for the children, and have but small abilities for training! How many there are that discharge their duty without method, blindly, with no other guide but their own changeable moods, adopting systems that are without reason, and have the very opposite result of real training, deforming the mind and character rather than forming it!

In any case, no course of civic morality, no reading or commenting upon the present code will ever develop in youth strength of will or

rectitude of judgment. Such influences will never render men capable of useful service to God and country.[1]

Education must be of a religious nature, "strengthened by the stimulus of faith. No one has ever doubted the force of faith to give temper to character, but its influence is not restricted to this. By awakening the best emotions of a child, religious belief sharpens the intelligence, and as the mind is quickened by these emotions, it is prepared for the grafting in of fresh ideas. Faith not only inspires moral and intellectual energy, it is proved to produce in a wonderful manner physical energy as well."[2]

We have thought it advisable to lay stress upon all these causes for the benefit both of the afflicted and of those threatened by the evil. When warned of the danger, they may more easily ward off the consequences.

Neurasthenic patients are usually subject to feelings of fatigue, and are incapable of effort. The least exertion exhausts their limited reserve of energy, and reduces them to a state of complete inactivity. Most persons of this class are deficient from birth (*insuffisants*, as the French doctor, Deschamps, expresses it). They are not to be cured by any process of persuasion; they need "great force of energy, tenacity of will, patience, resignation, and attention."[3]

[1] *Cf.* Mgr. Delamaire, *Les Dangers de l'École sans Dieu:* Paris, 1907; Nicolaÿ, *Les Enfants mal Élevés:* Paris, Perrin.

[2] Dr. Ch. Fressinger, *Science du Spiritualisme*, chap. iii. —Paris, Perrin.

[3] Dr. Albert Deschamps, *op. cit.*, chap. iii.

Some are temporarily overcome by violent overstrain, physical or moral, or by a state of elation which paralyzes their activity. In any case, spiritual treatment will be of valuable assistance to supplement the failing energy and to remove obstacles to the working of the physical cure.

The troubles arising from extreme sensitiveness are not of less moment: such as the cases in which the mere contact of the clothes is enough to cause very real pain. The sufferers in some cases have a dread of heat or cold, or find it intolerable to live anywhere but in a temperate climate. Their sensitiveness may be equally affected in some particular way: headaches are perhaps constant but variable in their kind. Sometimes, and perhaps most often, it seems to them as though the head were encased in a helmet, whence the name of "galeati," given to one class of patients by Dr. Charcot. At times they may complain of heat, a burning sensation, or, on the contrary, of intense cold. Usually the pain is felt all down the spine, in the small of the back and in the loins, and the patient comes to believe he is attacked by some disease of the spinal cord. We may also refer to the common cases of sensory hyperæsthesia (excessive sensitiveness of the organs of sense). The eyes are painfully affected by any bright light, or even a small noise will cause a sudden start. The slightest odours are disliked, and perfumes are simply held in horror.

Insomnia, again, is a symptom as common as it is painful, whether it be brought on by overwork or by physical or moral suffering.

We pass over other physical manifestations of these afflictions because, though numerous, they are perhaps less constant than those we have touched upon, and we come to a consideration of the mental state. This is far more important from the point of view that we have chosen. The mind shows the evil influence of nervous maladies in such states as instability, restlessness, brooding over sickness, and weakness of the higher faculties. The memory, faculty of attention, and the will, are impaired. Emotions are easily aroused, various wrong impressions are readily formed, and accompanied with great anxiety and fear.

Some patients live in a state of perpetual agitation, as though their whole frame were charged with electricity. They think they will only find relief in some other surroundings—anywhere but where they actually are. They are victims of inconstancy and of a perpetual restlessness. According to the impressions of the moment, they are ready either to undertake or cast aside anything and everything. They possess no constant energy or attention except in thinking of their affliction, and of this they never cease to talk as long as they have the strength and can find a listener. It is useless to tell them we understand their state perfectly well, we know their sufferings, that it is troublesome to have to listen to all these details. We may assure them that the recounting of all these details can do no good, even though they had a host of doctors in theology and in medicine to attend to them, and that their state of mind is but the result of their malady. It is all to no purpose. One

can never convince them, and very seldom calm them.

One day the author had a visit from a person whose manner and tone of voice betrayed at once a neurotic patient. In the hope of calming the sufferer and finishing the pitiful story once for all, he was allowed to continue till the dinner-bell rang. The interview had then lasted for two hours. From that day letters began to pour in from the patient, some of them of an immense length, one of forty-two large pages. Visits and letters did not cease until the person discovered that nothing came of all the trouble, and that some other line of conduct must be adopted. The writer assured him again and again that his case was too much for one, and would need the united attentions of several physicians and several theologians.

The example chosen at random may serve to give some idea of the state of mind of these sufferers. Dr. Charcot has termed them *geignards* (from *geindre*, to whine). Such patients would certainly treat their doctor as they do the director of their conscience if the visits were charged at the same rate.

About half-past four one morning a patient rushed into the chapel of the establishment and begged the Superior to tell the Chaplain to give him the Last Sacraments at once, because he was going to die. The Chaplain immediately went to see him, with the result that the patient was soon persuaded that the danger was not so serious as he had imagined. At midday he ate his lunch with appetite, and then took a long walk. He resumed his ordinary life according to the treatment pre-

scribed for him, but the same disturbance soon recurred. This time the poor man left the house quite suddenly, but returned after a few weeks. When the Chaplain met him again, he learned that, as he had refused to administer the Last Sacraments, the deluded man had gone back to his home to receive them there, so as not to die without them. Moreover, he had been in another institute for a time because he was ashamed to return after running away as he did. The Chaplain inquired about his health, and found that he had been getting worse and worse, and that it was useless to remain at his own home when sickness was all round him. This last delusion is not altogether an unusual one amongst such patients.

Some neurotic patients are so incapable of exercising their will-power that all that remains to them of physical force, moral energy, or vitality, appears to be beyond their control. There are degrees in this diminution of will. It begins with indecision in small affairs, and may end in complete loss of the use of the faculty in extreme cases, when the malady is termed "psychasthenia." Incapable of any real work or continuous occupation, the victims of this state find it impossible to co-ordinate their ideas, to write even a few lines on matters with which they are perfectly well acquainted. Often in the course of conversation they cannot recall words, expressions, or particularly proper names, though perhaps at one time they may have been brilliant conversationalists. The thought of what previously afforded them pleasure now leaves them quite indifferent, or perhaps only tends to intensify their

evil. They regard themselves as a burden to all about them, or they are neglected, despised, or betrayed in some way by relatives or faithful and devoted friends. Whatever kindness may be shown them, they can see only coldness, or selfishness, or downright hostility, conspiring to undermine their safety. Not infrequently they believe they are going out of their minds. Speak to them of some misfortune, they are sure to be threatened by it. Mention an illness or some failing, and they have the one and are guilty of the other. Such persons must avoid reading works of moral theology or medicine, in which sometimes they find a special attraction. The apprehension of troubles that are not likely to happen causes them greater torment than the actual experience of them would occasion. These poor victims are continually suffering the agony of a man on the brink of a precipice, where the slightest movement would hurl him into the abyss. Small occurrences that pass quite unnoticed for most people are all eagerly seized upon by these diseased minds as objects of sight on a photographic plate, as sounds in a phonograph, or as water is absorbed by a sponge. The result is disastrous confusion in the mind. In some instances particular impressions remain predominant. It requires an effort of memory for some to recall their age, because they have the idea that they are no more than when their affliction was first recognized.

It is clear that thoughts, imaginations, and desires that are evil in a greater or less degree, that are distorted, or even criminal—in a word, temptations of every kind—are no more than the natural

result of the morbid state of neurotic patients. There is not the slightest degree of sinfulness very often in these things, yet the sufferer charges himself with grave offences, sometimes with downright crimes, and believes he has incurred the displeasure and the maledictions of God. It is all because the state of mind does not allow him to distinguish between temptation and consent, nor, consequently, to estimate the limits of his own responsibility.

At times, even in cases that at first sight appear serious, one may trace the origin of the evil to ordinary, simple, unimportant scruples arising from a want of instruction or from defective moral training. Under the influence of enlightened spiritual direction these may soon be banished from the conscience. But there are false ideas of a more serious and more tenacious nature—real scruples, in fact—fears that arise from an unhealthy state of mind, and these will be considered in a separate chapter.

I have known some nervous subjects who within the space of a few hours would come several times with a view to seeking advice, and would go away without doing so merely because they could not make up their minds to knock at the door. Others would come, and at the last would lack the courage to tell the real motive of their visit. When I have been able to bring them to make known this trouble, or to make up their minds to do what was required, they have scarcely known how to express their gratitude for what they regarded as a great service. Again, many put off the reading of their correspon-

dence as long as possible, for fear lest it may contain bad news or for a similar motive. One person leaving the institute carried a letter away with him, and read it several weeks later. This sense of insecurity arises in great measure from excessive emotionalism and impressionability.

Dr. Dubois says: "Neurotic subjects show in a very marked degree this exaggerated emotionalism, and it renders them incapable of supporting the vicissitudes of life. The smallest events become so many catastrophes for them, the slightest reverse discourages them. They are not satisfied with overestimating the obstacles they have to encounter, or with only recoiling from them, but they excite in themselves strong emotions, unfortunately very real for themselves, but entirely the creation of the imagination. They are greatly disturbed by receiving a telegram before they have any idea of the message. They will read between the lines of a simple letter, and assign the most improbable and sinister causes to any and every little occurrence."[1]

A number of sufferers are timid and full of fear. They will not venture to speak or to undertake anything, because the task seems to be above them. Some are inclined to be melancholy, and like to be alone, whilst others cannot tolerate solitude. Almost always they are restless, sad, broken, incapable of effort, or of making any decision. They spend their time thinking with regret over what they have done, or how they may avoid what they have to do, for fear lest it may only occasion deeper regret. Often

[1] *Les Psychonévroses et leur Traitement Moral*, leçon xiii. Paris, Masson, 1905.

they seem indifferent to all around them, even to their own state, and when they are asked about their health, they reply with hesitation and indecision that they suffer in every way: there is nothing to be done for them—they are incurable.

A person threatened with blindness gave a very calm account of an interview granted by a distinguished oculist. When a friend expressed surprise at her calmness, in spite of the far from hopeful decision of the specialist, she answered: "This affliction is nothing compared with the other." The *other* affliction from which she was suffering was neurasthenia.

As they are more or less liable to impression in this way, and only proportionately responsible for their actions, victims of neurosis often cause great pain to those around them by their harshness of character. Some little unlooked-for event, something that crosses them—perhaps a simple remark—will suffice to arouse them to impatience or anger. In periods of low spirits or bad humour, in the changes of weather especially, some of these sufferers will become so irritable that for the merest trifles they will break out into complaints, criticisms, remonstrances, or bursts of temper, at which they are the first to be surprised as soon as calm is restored again. It must be confessed that many who have to live with these neurotic patients are sometimes very severe, especially—as is often the case—if their treatment is carried out in a religious atmosphere. People are inclined to regard only the external act, and do not know, or do not choose to believe, that the act is ordinarily no more than a

first impulse performed without any reflection (*motus primo primus*). Hence one is not surprised to hear remarks like the following, made by a young Hungarian lady, who had been a sufferer herself. On seeing these pages, she exclaimed: "These poor victims are not always agreeable, and people have no liking for their company; they have few friends, but they will find one in you."

What adds to all these afflictions—at least with a certain number of persons—is the impossibility of conveying to others precisely what they endure. Unless their neighbours have gone through the same state themselves, no amount of charity or intelligence or good-will will enlighten them. It would require an entirely new vocabulary to do so. There is not, and there never will be, any real appreciation of the sad lot of those suffering from nerve disorders except by those that have experienced them. This may explain the fact that patients often choose to make a long stay in places that are neither interesting nor agreeable, but merely because they find a fellow-feeling amongst other patients. If they understand one another, it is not because they speak in technical terms. Using only the ordinary forms of speech, a few words suffice, or perhaps only the name of their disorder, in order to make the scenes of *indescribable* pain flash across their minds. *Indescribable* it may well be called, for the pen can no more give even a simple idea of it than can the scientist catch the lightning that severs the clouds.

Some people are fond of comparing various states of neurosis with other maladies. It is like drawing

inferences as to the nature and effects of alcohol from a knowledge of water, merely because both are liquids of the same colour.

By no means the least of the pitiful afflictions of neurosis is *fear*, which often enters into every single action of the sick person. Victims of a disordered imagination, many are so haunted by this sense of fear that what St. Francis of Sales said of scrupulous souls may be applied to them: "They are always in fear that some new fear is going to seize upon them."

Pascal says: "The greatest philosopher in the world on a plank thrown across a precipice will find his imagination prevail, however much his reason may persuade him that he is safe. Some cannot even think of such a situation without getting pale or bursting into a perspiration."[1] What is a mere observation or theoretical idea to the philosopher is a veritable reality for those suffering from neurosis. Their sphere of action seems to be confined to a kind of quicksands. For them everything bristles with difficulties and dangers without number. Whilst the healthy man lives and moves about upon firm ground, the other feels as though he were on a narrow footbridge or on a plank without any guard, with a vast depth beneath him. He feels that if giddiness comes over him, he will fall headlong into space, will break his limbs, or be killed. All the reasoning in the world will not convince him of the groundlessness of his *fear*. He acts and

[1] *Pensées*, pt. i. Montaigne has also written: "Let a plank be thrown across these two towers . . . there is no wisdom in philosophy strong enough to give you courage to walk across" (*Essais*, l. ii., chap. xii.).

feels under the impulse of his disorder—a deceptive force that grips him like a powerful serpent. If he is more fortunate than Laocoön, and escapes from this serpent grip with his life, he will certainly not escape a sort of moral and physical paralysis. This will affect him in a greater or less degree, deprive him of all energy and elasticity, and leave him often incapable of all power of action. This pitiful state of mind is due to excessive emotionalism, as we said, and this, in its turn, is traceable to general debility.

"Anxiety," says Dr. Zbinden, "is the predominant characteristic of the state of nervousness. It arises from this fact: These patients have the feeling of being in a labyrinth from which there is no escape. Their state of mind is transformed; they are not what they used to be, and they ask themselves why they have got into this situation, and how they are going to extricate themselves. In dealing with them, we must only answer them in all sincerity, and the explanation of their trouble is the only means of dispelling their anxiety.

"There is a tendency," adds the doctor, "to this anxiety in presence of what is uncertain or unknown. Considering this peculiarity of our patients, I am often reminded of a little experience of my own daughter Margaret, who was only three years old at the time. The child had received as a Christmas present a cardboard donkey, which nodded its head as soon as it was moved. Margaret was very fond of the toy as long as it was still, but as soon as she took hold of it and the head began to move, she began to cry, and ran away. I tried

to explain that there was nothing to be afraid of—that the donkey was only cardboard, and could not do her any harm. She could not be persuaded, and was as much terrified as before. Then I unhooked the head of the donkey and showed her the mechanism, and with that her fear was overcome. So in the modern treatment of mental ailments (psychotherapeutics) the aim should be to show patients the secret workings of their state in order to remove their fears. A state of nervousness, however painful it may be, is not to be regarded as serious, and the patients must be brought to see that they have no more reason for fear than my child had when she saw the toy donkey move its head. Nervousness causes people to look at the dark side of things always, and considerably lessens self-reliance." [1]

These last three characteristics—lack of will-power, anxiousness, and fear—may exist separately, and may obtain so strong a hold upon the individual as to develop into a fixed mental state. *Phobia* is described as fear in its worst form—that is, when it becomes constant, restricted to one idea, object, or fact, or to one class of objects or facts. It may go even farther, and so fill the mind as to become *obsession*.[2] And this brings us into the range of *psychasthenia*, of which we spoke at the beginning of the chapter. This affection has much in common with what Charcot named "constitutional neurasthenia," and what older authors termed "cerebras-

[1] *Conseils aux Nerveux et à leurs Familles*, par le Dr. H. Zbinden, Professor of Neuropathology in the University of Geneva. Paris, Lemoigne, 1906.

[2] *Obsession*, however, may sometimes occur independently of what we have called *phobia*.

thenia." Heredity, and in particular hereditary neurosis, plays an important part in the development of psychasthenia, which is chiefly characterized by certain psychical phenomena. The chief of these, and the one that has the greatest hold upon patients, is *obsession*.

According to the opinion of medical experts in these maladies, the most intelligent patients are the ones to feel most the low state to which they are reduced by their ailment. These sufferers form a class quite apart. They are like black men amongst the whites. They form an outer fringe of humanity, as it is no longer possible for them to observe ordinary human laws and customs. Often they become a prey to a feeling of disgust for life itself, or of continual despair, and they would welcome the end of their existence. Harassed by these torments, many of them long for death to end their wretched state. If at the beginning of the trouble a patient has not the strength to react with energy against all these thoughts which with time only gather fresh force, he will probably soon come to regard suicide as a natural and legitimate method of release. Without the intervention of some kind and charitable friend, who can give constant supervision, and without special help from God, the deluded person may at any time carry his false notion into execution, under the persuasion that the Supreme Judge will take into account the hardship which impelled him to this extremity.

"The attitude of the doctor," says Dr. Dubois, "is very difficult, in view of the many phases of melancholia. In cases that seem to be mild,

suicide may occur quite suddenly. The practitioner ought never to forget the saying of Gudden, who perished with the King of Bavaria, through neglecting the rule he himself had laid down: 'Never trust a patient suffering from melancholia.'"[1]

A good number of persons are known to the writer who have been pursued and tormented with the thought of suicide, and who have attempted more than once to put an end to their lives. One person had been undergoing treatment successfully for some time, and one day escaped the vigilance of his relatives, and threw himself into the River Inn. He several times described afterwards the sensations he went through when he felt himself carried away by the current, and was terrified to think he might have been eternally lost, as he believed, if he had been drowned.

In another instance a patient took an insufficient dose of poison. The remainder of the dose was taken away when his intention was discovered, and the result was that, owing to a strong constitution, he escaped with a severe illness. Being haunted with the thought of suicide, he always kept a little stock of poison to do away with himself when his sufferings from despair became insupportable. The writer obtained a promise from him that he would part with the poison and renounce his criminal intentions. Whether he kept the promise cannot be related.

We may repeat that no language can express the torture that is experienced in cases like those de-

[1] *Op. cit.*, leçon xv.

scribed above, and perhaps nothing in the world can give a better idea of the despair of the lost souls. These sufferings constitute a real anticipation of hell itself. So strange, too, is the affliction that the patient himself in moments of peace and respite is incapable of forming any exact idea, even approximately, of the trials he has gone through. He thinks he must have exaggerated, until the torments return to declare their reality. These poor victims might well apply to themselves the words of the prophet: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow . . . my strength is weakened . . . my eyes run down with water. . . . Hear, I pray you, all ye people, and see my sorrow. . . . I called for my friends, but they deceived me. . . . They have heard that I sigh, and there is none to comfort me."[1]

The words of Ecclesiasticus are also applicable here: "Better is a poor man who is sound and strong of constitution than a rich man who is weak and afflicted with evils. Health of the soul in holiness of justice is better than all gold and silver: and a sound body than immense revenues. There are no riches above the riches of the health of the body: and there is no pleasure above the joy of the heart. Better is death than a bitter life: and everlasting rest than continual sickness."[2]

Volumes might be written on the ever-varying forms of these ailments. What has been said here may seem already too long for this work, but it is hoped that it may not be beside our purpose. Above

[1] Lamentations i. 12-21. [2] Ecclus. xxx. 14-17.

all, it will not be wasted if it helps to determine some sufferers who can only be led, like children, to follow the advice which we offer.

As we have already said, the observance of religious duties, or even the thought of these duties, is enough to disquiet and excite some patients. Some are unable to sleep the night before a Confession or Communion. The case may be cited of a priest, a doctor of theology, who could not sleep when he thought that on the morrow he had to give Holy Communion to the faithful during Mass. We sometimes hear of priests, learned and intelligent men, who will not celebrate Mass for fear of making mistakes. Those that suffer know all this by experience. They also know, or should know, that at the same time it is in the performance of their religious acts, and *in these only*, that they will find that tranquillity which is necessary for the well-being of body as well as soul. Then, too, they must recognize that they possess the means of rendering their sufferings pleasing to God, and therefore meritorious.

We cannot too strongly recommend to all frequent and even daily Communion. This has always been our advice, and we have witnessed wonderful results. And it is but natural, for is not the Holy Communion the source of all benefits? Bossuet says: "With Jesus Christ come all graces, lights, consolations, and all the riches of heaven and earth. All is given to us with Jesus Christ, and when He gives Himself, He can refuse nothing."

Moreover, by practising frequent Communion we are but following out the teaching of the Church,

and in particular the instructions of the Holy Father, Pope Pius X., who, in an audience of December 17, 1905, ratified, confirmed, and ordered the publication of the *Decree*, of which we give the principal headings:

"Frequent and daily Communion as a thing most earnestly desired by Christ Our Lord and by the Catholic Church, should be open to all the faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life; so that no one, who is in a state of grace, and who approaches the Holy Table with a right and devout intention, can be lawfully hindered therefrom.

"2. A right intention consists in this: that he who approaches the Holy Table, should do so not out of routine, or vainglory, or human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, of being more closely united with Him by charity, and of seeking this Divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects.

"3. Although it is most expedient that those who communicate frequently or daily should be free from venial sins, especially from such as are fully deliberate, and from any affection thereto, nevertheless, it is sufficient that they be free from mortal sin with the purpose of never sinning in future; and if they have this sincere purpose, it is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves even from venial sins and from all affection thereto.

"4. But whereas the Sacraments of the New Law, though they take effect *ex opere operato*, nevertheless produce a greater effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better, therefore care is to be taken that Holy Communion be pre-

ceded by serious preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving, according to each one's strength, circumstances, and duties.

"5. That the practice of frequent and daily Communion may be carried out with greater prudence and more abundant merit, the Confessor's advice should be asked. Confessors, however, are to be careful not to dissuade anyone from frequent and daily Communion, provided that he is in a state of grace and approaches with a right intention.

"6. But since it is plain that by the frequent or daily reception of the Holy Eucharist union with Christ is fostered, the spiritual life more abundantly sustained, the soul more richly endowed with virtues, and an even surer pledge of everlasting happiness bestowed on the recipient, therefore parish priests, confessors, and preachers, in accordance with the approved teaching of the Roman Catechism, are frequently and with great zeal to exhort the faithful to this devout and salutary practice.

"7. Frequent and daily Communion is to be promoted, especially in religious Orders and Congregations of all kinds; with regard to which, however, the decree *Quemadmodum*, issued on December 17, 1890, by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, is to remain in force. It is also to be promoted especially in ecclesiastical seminaries, where students are preparing for the service of the altar; as also in all Christian establishments, of whatever kind, for the training of youth."[1]

[1] Translation by F. M. de Zulueta, S.J., in *The Eucharistic Triduum*. *Cf.* L'Abbé Farre, *Le Ciel ouvert par la Confession sincère et la Communion fréquente:* Paris, Lecoffre; and Monseigneur de Ségur, *La très Sainte Communion:* Paris, Tolra.

"In the great mystery of the confessional," writes Fiessinger, "words of comfort and of faith are drunk in with avidity by souls who in their trouble and anxiety have come and knelt to make known their sickness. When the priest has spoken they feel a welcome serenity come upon them. They return to their avocations with their hearts relieved of a burden, they are supplied with right thoughts, and are resolved to make the sacrifices necessary for their welfare. From a medical point of view, Confession ought to be regarded as a wonderful means of restoring right mental balance." Professor Raymond and M. P. Janet say: "Regular Confession might have been instituted by some mental specialists of genius as the best means of treating the victims of obsession.[1] But why apply this only to victims of obsession? Where is the man or woman who does not pass through periods of depression and bitterness? Between the extremes of morbid obsession and that state of anxiousness which is fully justified by many of the circumstances of life there are a good many intermediary stages. Confession acts upon all these states of despondency like a healing balm to pacify troubles and quicken dying hopes. The abandonment of Confession may easily lead to a condition of anxious unrest."[2]

It is not our intention to ask any patient to undertake anything that is beyond his strength. In these matters the condition of the soul must be considered something like that of the body. Wounds are not healed by a too frequent renewal of dressing,

[1] *Les Obsessions et les Neurasthénies*, t. i., p. 707. Paris, Alcan.
[2] *Op. cit.*, chap. iv.

but they must be left undisturbed for a time to cicatrize. A like principle is to be applied to the exercises of piety. The neglect of it may cause more harm than good to the ailing soul. The advice that will be offered here is meant only to convey reassurance, and to guide those that are in trouble in the fulfilment of their religious duties. We will explain the conditions necessary for these duties, and point out the advantages that flow from the practice of them. Those that do not already know the happiness of it must exercise themselves in a sense of trust in God, and in submission to His will by means of acts of *Faith* and *Resignation*, which constitute the best preparation for the reception of the Sacraments. These are the supreme remedy for all those ills which deprive the human soul of peace, vitality, and courage, qualities that are absolutely necessary for anyone who recognizes that life is a probation, a long pilgrimage, at the close of which everyone who has striven well shall receive reward proportionate to his labours.[1]

[1] Works consulted: Stilling, *Untersuchungen über die Spinalirritation:* Leipzig, 1840. Valleix, *De la Névralgie Générale*, in *Union Médicale et Bulletin de Thérapeutique*, 1848. Axenfeld, *Névroses* in *Éléments de Pathologie médicale de Requin*, t. iv.: Paris, 1867. Kirshaber, *De la Névropathie Cérébro-cardiaque:* Paris, 1875. Bouchut, *Du Nervosisme Aigu et Chronique et des Maladies Nerveuses:* Paris, 1883. A. Baumgarten, *La Neurasthénie:* Wierishofen, Hartmann, 1906. A. Rémond, *Précis des Maladies Mentales:* Paris, de Rudeval, 1906. P. Janet, *Névroses et Idées fixes*, 2 vols., Paris, Alcan, 1908.

CHAPTER II

ON HYSTERIA

In spite of the length of the previous chapter we think it will be useful to say something further on a kind of neurosis about which we hear a good deal, though it is difficult to define what it really is. Hysteria, like all nervous diseases, is traceable to remotest antiquity. Briquet says that it has existed as long as civilization. It seems probable that most of the Pythonesses were subject to hysteria. In the Middle Ages some unfortunate hysterical women were regarded as witches, and condemned for crimes of which they were not guilty, or for which they were not fully responsible.

The etymological sense of the word should be altogether disregarded, for it is not an ailment that affects females only, nor does it imply a disposition to shamelessness, as was believed until recent years. As far back as the eighteenth century, Lepois, and after him Sydenham, decided that the brain is the seat of the disease. We may mention, as appearing about the middle of the nineteenth century, the works of Briquet and Legrand du Saulle in France, and of Brodie in England. More recently Charcot has shown that it is possible to reproduce by suggestion most of the symptoms of hysteria, and

hence that the fixed idea plays a predominant part in the affection. A pupil of his, P. Janet, wrote a thesis for his doctorate on the mental defects in hysterical subjects, and here he attributes the phenomena to what he calls a *désagrégation de la personnalité*. Personality he conceives as a sort of comprehensive perception resulting from many ideas accumulated and systematized.

Another theory that attracts some attention is that of Dr. Fiessinger. "If," he says, "we go to the root of hysteria, we observe that what chiefly characterizes this species of neurosis is an excess of nervous energy. Hysterical persons have vivid perceptions—they experience agitated, disordered, violent impulses. The mind, constantly working at high pressure, tends to discharge the excess of energy that seems to stifle it in gossip and gesticulations, or sometimes in attacks of convulsion."[1] Hence, according to Fiessinger, the contraction of the personality is the effect and not the cause of the disorder. "If the field of consciousness is restricted in hysterical patients," he says, "it is because the overcharge of nervous activity, being unregulated, spreads itself over a sphere to which it should not extend."[2] This view is not unlike that of Dr. Deschamps, which was briefly touched upon in the preceding chapter. The symptoms of the disorder which, after all, are merely disturbances of energy, either by excess or default, would seem to confirm this opinion. We shall consider this farther on. We will first indicate the origin of

[1] *Erreurs Sociales et Maladies Morales*, 4e partie, chap. iii. Paris, Perrin, 1909. [2] *Op. cit., ibid.*

hysteria, and then give some attention to its physical and moral character.

Women are specially subject to hysteria, though men are not by any means free from it, as Briquet has shown. It may be found in infants, in girls and boys alike. In women the evil manifests itself chiefly at the age of puberty, and diminishes with age, though it may return later in life. Men are most liable between twenty-five and forty. Hysteria is of itself hereditary, but may also spring from any inherited defective state of nerves. In the opinion of Déjerine, it is of all kinds of neurosis the most readily propagated by heredity. Grasset introduces diathetic heredity as a factor: the father is often the source of diathesis, and the mother of neuropathic heredity.

Without speaking of alcoholism—the fruitful source of so many disorders in parents and their offspring—or of wrongly understood systems of education, we may point out that certain moral and personal influences may easily give rise to hysteria.

It is certain that the present-day feverish life, in which everything must be rushed at the highest speed, has many deplorable results. Everyone wants to attain his object, and it must be done as quickly as possible. No one is content with his actual lot.

Grasset writes: "All who show a predisposition to nervous troubles must be warned against wearing themselves out in that feverish agitation which tends to draw everyone into the daily giddy whirlpool. Take notice that life may be overdone (*à outrance*) not only in pursuit of evil (in play and pleasure), but

also in pursuit of good: for example, in industry, commerce, and science. Men are often urged to struggle to equal or surpass others, to heap up a fortune, to become known, to ambition all sorts of honours, and secure them well before the age of forty. If all this is not compassed before that age, the ambitious man finds he becomes an object of persecution. This is a mild form of madness (*demi-folie*), if not worse."[1]

"Moral influences," says Legrand du Saulle, "assuredly play a predominant part in the genesis of hysteria. Emotions, disappointments, deceptions, all those causes that tend to excite the nervous system forcibly, and especially those that do so continuously, may without any other influence determine at any given time this derangement of the balance of the organism, and bring on the disorder which we are studying. With all the greater effect will these causes operate on an organism already predisposed to the disease—by age or the special conditions of hereditary antecedents."[2]

Hypnotism and especially spiritism should be named as contributory causes in some instances.[3] Charcot and Gilles de la Tourette have pointed out the influence of the practices of spiritism in the development of hysteria. Parents should have especial care that nurses and governesses do not

[1] *Demi-fous et Demi-responsables*, chap. v.: Paris, Alcan, 1907.

[2] *Les Hystériques, État Physique et Mental:* Paris, 1883. Professor Babinski, of Paris, attributes the chief part in the genesis of hysteria to *suggestion*.

[3] *Cf.* P. Coconnier, O.P., *L'Hypnotisme Franc.* Paris, Lecoffre.

tell their children terrifying stories of animals or ghosts and suchlike. The consequence of such stories may be disastrous in the impressionable minds of children perhaps already predisposed to the evil.

Wounds and injuries that bring on hysteria also act by a disturbance of the emotions. According to Brodie, *trauma* (the abnormal condition caused by external injury) may not only excite a latent disposition, but may determine the form and the localization of nervous symptoms. He holds that these symptoms depend rather on the constitution than on the actual injury sustained. So that even a light form of *trauma* will have serious effects if the mental or moral emotion be intense.

The force of imitation and contagion in these matters is beyond dispute. Its method of working is clearly that of suggestion. Bailly recounts how, on a first Communion day in the Church of St. Roch, a young girl was suddenly seized with convulsions during Mass. Within half an hour fifty or sixty women were overtaken with the same convulsions.[1] Recently Dr. Dubois met with cases of epidemic (hysterical) St. Vitus's dance in girls' schools at Bâle and at Berne. At Berne also thirty pupils developed pains in the joints of the body, accompanied with rhythmical movements of the arms. It was found necessary to separate the affected individuals in order to prevent the increase of the cases by imitation.

"These facts," says Dr. Dubois, "suggest this reflection. It is often said, and rightly so, that in

[1] Quoted by J. Grasset.

order to induce hysteria there must be both neuropathic predisposition and some stimulating agency. Now it is hardly probable that those thirty young girls, all of different parentage, had that special predisposition and possessed the latent influences of hysteria. I am persuaded, on the other hand, that most of them would never suffer the like attacks again. And it must have been the same with many of those women who took part in the epidemic dancing of the Middle Ages.

The above-mentioned girls were simply thrown into conditions of nearness and close contact with others, and on this account alone developed a psychological state favourable to the contagion, and they succumbed to the influence by reason of a weakness of judgment that is quite natural at their age. There is no limit to susceptibility to suggestion in children, for the simple reason that the mind is not sufficiently developed. Adults who retain this susceptibility and become hysterical, thereby give proof of their mental weakness. The hysterical woman has still a child's mind, and suffers from *infantilisme psychique*. The hysterical man, who probably in his attacks does not exhibit the same freaks of imagination as the woman, is at least distinctly feminine in his mental powers."[1]

From all this it may readily be understood how dangerous it is for two hysterical patients to occupy the same room, as unfortunately does occur in some establishments professing to treat these cases. The most elementary rules of prudence would suggest very different methods. Otherwise that shrewd

[1] *Op. cit.*, leçon xiv.

remark of Wendell Holmes may soon be verified: "Where there is one hysterical young woman you will soon find two patients."[1] If that be true of persons in good health, what is to be said of those that are already more or less affected?

Hysteria may develop slowly through a period of warning symptoms when the patient suffers palpitation, a sense of suffocation, a disposition to weeping, and so forth.

Usually the patient will then break down suddenly by some convulsive crisis. We will not speak at length of the physical symptoms, with which we are only indirectly concerned here,[2] but will merely offer the advice that we judge useful in the various circumstances.

The convulsive form of the crisis is not the exclusive indication of hysteria. Women often succumb to the malady without any such violent disturbance. The occasions of the attack may be either physical or mental, as some strong emotion, anger, or contradiction. Hence comes the theory that hysterical persons should never be crossed or contradicted in any way. The theory is a fatal one in its consequences.

People who have dealings with the sick person submit to every little caprice, but do not in any way further the cure of the patient, and probably retard it. What is chiefly needed in handling these cases

[1] *Op. cit.*

[2] We refer the reader to the works already quoted, especially to the very notable work of Professors J. Grasset and G. Ranzier: *Traité Pratique des Maladies du Système Nerveux*, 2 vols. *Cf.* t. ii., art. 4, chap. i. Paris, Masson, 1894.

is to address oneself at once to the causes of the affliction, whether they be physical or mental.

During the attack consciousness is generally maintained, so that nothing should be mentioned which the patient ought not to hear. On the other hand, anything like expressions of sorrow, sighs, and so forth coming from persons present only tends to prolong the crisis, and often acts as very harmful suggestion. A few words of kindness and of gentle persuasion will prove most effectual in calming the patient.

The convulsions are at times only partial, and may then be called "spasms," affecting the sufferer in one or other part of the system, as in fits of laughter, or yawning, or vomiting, etc.

Closely allied with these spasmodic attacks are contractions that often follow temporary paralysis. The most important are peri-articular contractions, which are sometimes regarded as some serious affection of the joints, whereas in reality they are no more than painful muscular contractions. Spasms and contractions are troubles that arise in hysteria from excess of energy. Where there is a lack of energy paralysis is the result. Almost a fourth of the total number of hysterical persons fall victims to paralysis, as an effect of violent emotion or excessive strain.

The stroke may be of the hemiplegic type, affecting one side of the body, or the paraplegic, which is confined to the lower members only.[1]

[1] According to P. Janet, paralysis of the right side, whether total or partial, is often accompanied with loss of speech in hysterical subjects. *Cf. Les Névroses*. Paris, Flammarion, 1909.

All these affections, as well as those described farther on, are quite curable, and must never make the patient give up hope.

Another source of troubles is sensitiveness, and here again we must apply the distinction of excess and default. In the former case we have hyperæsthesia, an exaggeration of sensitiveness that amounts to actual pain. When this state becomes generalized the patient undergoes a veritable torture: the simple contact of any object whatsoever causes intolerable suffering; "he is unable to handle any object, to walk, or set foot to the ground; he cannot rest in bed, and is tortured by a perpetual state of insomnia. At times there comes also a kind of hyperæsthesia of the senses that produces a state of horrible impressionability."[1]

This state usually affects all one side of the body, whilst the other (in most instances the left) remains insensible. Or, again, it may be localized to certain organs only. Then it gives the patient a pretext for false ideas and erroneous explanations. We knew a person who suffered from gastralgia arising from hysteria. The sufferer was undergoing a most severe dietary, and at length reduced his allowance to a quite insufficient scale for his nourishment. This person was cured from the time that he was persuaded that he could digest a good meal without any difficulty, and thus saw that the pain he felt had but little to do with his digestive organs.

Some of the phenomena of which we are treating have in times past been connected with sorcery. "When," says Grasset, "an individual was sus-

[1] J. Grasset et G. Ranzier, *op. cit.*, p. 761.

pected, his eyes were bandaged, and needles were stuck into his flesh. If there was no pain or bleeding, the person was condemned and in some instances burned for sorcery."[1]

Every kind of sensitiveness, including that of the sensory organs, may be excited by hysteria. Some subjects are stricken with blindness. In this case the trouble is really psychical, and may, like all others, be remedied by the proper treatment. Others see objects in a colour which they do not possess in reality, or stained in various ways—as, for example, by blood. Some will be ever conscious of a repulsive odour which will bring on nervous crises. Others, again, will suffer in the sense of taste, and will perhaps consider some object delightful that a person in good health cannot tolerate.

In some instances real hallucinations may be met with. The patients "are persuaded that they see various animals, especially rats or cats, and sometimes fantastic creatures running about the floor or on the walls. In some rare cases faces appear before them making grimaces to frighten them."[2]

Finally some troubles described at length by various authors, as gangrene and vomiting of blood, are to be put down to mere pretence. Professor Dieulafoy, in his lectures at the Hôtel-Dieu, has quoted some remarkable examples of this.[3]

We come now to the psychical characteristics of hysteria.

[1] *Traité Pratique des Maladies du Système Nerveux*, *op. cit.*, t. ii., p. 767.

[2] J. Grasset, *Traité Pratique des Maladies du Système Nerveux*, *op. cit.*, t. ii., p. 772.

[3] *Journal des Praticiens*, No. 24, 1908.

Young persons with a tendency to hysteria "have a marked tendency to dwell upon sad and morbid thoughts, and become preoccupied as to the state of their health to a degree quite out of keeping with their age. Most frequently this proneness to gloomy thoughts in childhood is the symptom that presages the development of hysteria in a more advanced age."[1]

Legrand du Saulle says: "The hysterical person is before all and above all quite eccentric. The eccentric woman sees the actual realities of the world in a narrow way; she is extreme in everything. Of set purpose, she looks out for paradoxes, for unwholesome teachings, and dangerous theories. She possesses the faculty of quick perception, she is endowed with lively imagination, expresses herself readily, and when called upon can give proof of literary, poetic, or artistic ability. Nearly always this type of person complains of being misunderstood in her social sphere, of being taken for an original character, and of not being rightly appreciated. But, on the other hand, her work, though more or less brilliant, is without any real value; her activity is without order; her attention is with difficulty held to any serious matter; her occupations are neither regular nor sustained; her knowledge is but superficial, and all her undertakings, which are ever undergoing change from the time of their inception, can never attain any great success."[2]

According to Dr. Dubois, an hysterical subject is not usually really intelligent. He says: "I know that this statement has been called in question, and

[1] Huchard. [2] *Op. cit.*

that cases of hysteria have been cited as occurring in persons of very high intelligence. I admit this; but in such cases the intelligence is defective. We do not find in them that sound sense that is to be met with even in uncultured persons amongst whom we often set down mere lack of knowledge to stupidity. I have myself noted some rare exceptions to the rule. I have observed cases of hysteria in its most serious forms, with convulsions or delirium, in persons of intellectual power and of high moral culture. But still even in these there appeared some mental flaw: a wandering imagination, or a tendency to be too easily influenced. With a little balance such persons would give evidence of poetical gifts. Only by removing these flaws was I able to prove their real aptitude for culture, and thus it was to their reason that they owed their cure.

A real *savant*, a person of intellect, may suffer from neurasthenia; he will never be altogether hysterical. And to his better judgment and reasoning powers one can always appeal to extricate him from his neurasthenia. The mental defect is much more decidedly evident in the hysterical subject; weakness of mind and will is much more pronounced than in the person who has neurasthenia."[1]

Hence hysterical patients are full of sensitiveness, of romance, and intrigue, and a disposition to lying. For this reason Dr. Briquet says, " l'hystérie est la folie de la sensibilité," and other doctors have declared that the victims of the affliction are " remarkable for their spirit of duplicity, untruthfulness, and pretence." " A common trait amongst

[1] *Op. cit.*

them all," says Dr. Tardieu, "is an instinctive tendency to simulation, together with an inveterate habit of telling lies without interest or purpose, but simply for the sake of saying what is untrue." We may add that they often falsify the truth in order to make an appearance, to bring themselves under notice from motives of vanity.[1]

Again, there is to be noticed in hysteria a notable loss of affection. There is often complete indifference to everything that does not minister to their love of self. Sufferers from hysteria are on the "border line of reason and madness," and with little warning they pass from one extreme to the opposite: from love to hatred, gentleness to violence, from refinement to vulgarity, from prayer to blasphemy, from chastity to immorality, from a state of darkest melancholy to that of thrilling joy, or *vice versa*: the person that they worship to-day, to-morrow they will pursue with implacable hatred, in which they are ungovernable. They are capable of almost any excess to satisfy their hatred at times and in circumstances where it could not have been foreseen. They break out, for instance, in calumnies, they send anonymous letters, bear all kinds of false testimony; they have even been known to wound themselves severely in parts of the body rendered insensible by their affliction, and then accuse the persons for whom they have an aversion of having attacked them. Nothing seems to restrain them.

Their accusations often attack the moral standing of others. Priests and doctors by reason of their

[1] This is accounted for also by *auto-suggestion*—a mental phenomenon quite frequent amongst hysterical people.

duties are particularly exposed to this form of assault, so that they need to use great prudence in dealing with such subjects.

An hysterical person may be externally an angel of peace and of consolation, and in disposition a real demon of discord and evil.

According to the fluctuations of the illness, as it is excited or calmed, the patient will become as amiable and gentle as he was previously disagreeable. Considerate and polite, he will laugh with those that laugh and weep with those that weep, and make himself all things to all men. No sacrifice will hinder him from performing various acts of kindness and devotedness to his neighbour. He will expose himself to any privation, and even to risk life itself to do good and assist the needy. But in these persons this devotedness is like that impulsive tendency met with in other people—to talk, to tease, to insult, to deceive, to destroy things, to steal, or to commit murder. That is to say, it is a simple need of character, a kind of necessity. The patient acts under an unhealthy impulse, and the amount of good, as of ill, that he will perform depends upon the duration of the impulse. And, further, he seems in all that he does to be posing before others, to bring himself forward, to attract attention, and to make himself interesting—in a word, to make people speak about him. Hence it often happens that he will entirely neglect the duties of his state in order to give his attention to works of charity or practices of piety that are of an extraordinary nature and even somewhat absurd.

"The hysterical woman," says Legrand du Saulle,

" is like an instrument that may be used for two opposite purposes—she can set herself to further in a great degree either good or evil. But in any case she must leave the beaten track, and the straight and monotonous direction that everyone ought to keep throughout life."

As some hysterical persons regard themselves as being of superior attainments, and so much removed from their neighbours that none can be found to appreciate their character at its true worth, in their intense susceptibility they find fault with everything around them, and try to domineer without any restraint. The saying of Juvenal may well be taken as the expression of their sentiment: " Hoc volo, sic jubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas " (This is my will and command; let my will be the reason for it)—(*Sat.* VI., v. 223).

They are adepts in the practice of scheming and intriguing, in laying plots and deceits to mislead their neighbours, and even their closest friends. No one can find favour with them. They seem to reserve their deepest frauds for their best friends, who are usually deceived more or less according to the greater or less interest they take in the patients, or according to the greater or less services that they offer. Here is an example: Madame de X——, on returning to her home in Belgium after treatment under the special direction of Mgr. Kneipp, requested her doctor to inspect a bathroom that she had had placed in her house. No sooner was the doctor inside than he was met by a stream of water poured straight at his face. He turned to escape, but found that the door had been locked and the key removed

without his noticing it. He ran to turn off the water, but the trick had already had effect. There was nothing for him to do but to hurry home and change his drenched clothes. He left his patient laughing at the success of her practical joke.

Such persons are a real burden to their families, to their neighbours, or to the institutions in which they live. Everywhere they sow the seeds of discord, and make life unbearable. They are all the more dangerous because in their intervals of peace they show no signs of illness, and are often, by force of their training, polite considerate, gentle, and good-natured. Their frankness, too, is sufficient to deceive the most wary and experienced. Some doctors have been so often victimized by these cases that they refuse to have any more to do with them. "They do not murder," says Dr. Trélat, "but they kill those that live with them by slow degrees."

A case known to the writer is worth quoting. A person was engaged to chaperon on the Continent a young Polish lady who had been through a long illness. At first everything was most satisfactory. The companion's care and attention were beyond praise. But her enthusiasm for her charge was not of long standing. It came to be discovered that her extraordinary devotedness was not quite so disinterested as was imagined at the outset. The young lady was governed by a fear of her shrewd and sensitive companion, and only on very rare occasions dared to remark upon the painfulness of the situation. After about two years the attitude of both had altered entirely. The patient had almost become the humble servant of the com-

panion, and seemed to live for her sake only without any other thought. She was ever on the alert to give some pleasure by anticipating her wishes, or rather her morbid fancies, and these were neither few nor simple. Under pretext of requiring ever varying treatment and special care, the companion became a bore to all the officials and patients in our establishment. If a kind remonstrance was made to her she was always ready to answer with fresh complaints. And thus she continued until she was told plainly either to act more reasonably or to quit the establishment altogether.

These patients make dupes of other people, but often they begin by deceiving themselves. They exercise a kind of self-suggestion to turn the merest fancies into realities. For example, a smile, a salute, some little act of politeness or kindness, will suffice to make them believe they are objects of quite special admiration. Or the contrary impression may arise just as easily, because they are as suspicious as they are sensitive.

Sometimes one meets with individuals who are like children in their habits of laughing and crying together, and who are so superficial that their fickleness is the only trait in their character to be sure of; their brain is entirely taken up with the impression of the moment. According to some medical men, this inconstancy of sentiment and the absence of anything like premeditated action must account for the limited number of suicides amongst these very afflicted people.

Dr. Pitres says: " Persons afflicted with melancholia express the wish to end their lives, and a

long time beforehand determine the time and best means for the execution of their design. The hysterical person does not reflect in this way. For some little disappointment, that a well-balanced mind would make no account of, the hysterical subject resolves on committing suicide, and forthwith takes poison or jumps into a river. As soon as the attempt is found to fail the patient is delighted to have escaped, laughs at his or her folly, but then on the first occasion that presents itself goes through the performance again with as much sincerity of purpose as before, and with as little reflection."[1]

Whilst it must be admitted that some affected with hysteria are in no way responsible for their actions, whether good or bad, it must also be recognized that others are *more* or *less* responsible according to the nature and degree of their abnormal state, or, in other words, according as the impulse that governs them is more or less intense and lasting. Consequently even when there is responsibility in an individual case, it is yet much diminished, and therefore the reputation which is often given some of these patients is undeserved.

It often happens that hysteria will cause its victims to be self-opiniated, stubborn, and firmly attached to some *fixed idea*. They do not take into consideration that these phenomena are developed automatically and quite apart from the will, nor do they make any reflex judgment upon the obsession which ensues. They are unconscious victims. That fixed idea may cause paralysis in one case, contraction in another. One will refuse to walk, another

[1] *Cf. Leçons Cliniques sur l'Hystérie*, 1891.

to eat, and so on, under pretexts that in many instances are most trivial.

In such cases the obvious course is to trace out the *fixed idea*, and this is the business of the physician. Friends and relatives should do their part to *suggest* to the patient to act differently because of the inconveniences that his present conduct entails. This may be effected by careful insinuation, or by some other process adapted to the individuals and circumstances. In any case, it should be made to appear that the change is entirely due to the patient's personal action. Such means are not infallible, it must be admitted, but seem to us the most practical. By mere insistence no good will be achieved, but resistance will be stimulated on the part of the patient, and the result will be a series of *scenes* and crises as regrettable as they are unavailing. When the above method fails it would be better to procure for the patient an entire change of surroundings under the care of a competent doctor, who usually will soon be able to discover the cause of the mental troubles.

One day an hysterical lady of our establishment came to unburden her mind of a trouble regarding a letter which she had been expecting for a long period. A visitor called to see me, and I tried several times to make the patient understand that I would see her at another time, but all without effect. My visitor knew several languages, and we conversed in one unknown to the patient, who stubbornly refused to withdraw, but remained motionless as a statue during the whole of my interview. When I accompanied the stranger on his

departure I was obliged to get one of the nurses to take the patient away, as she declined to take any notice of me. A few hours later she came to apologize for her behaviour.

Some of the symptoms of hysteria not infrequently become exaggerated into a real mania. Untruthfulness is one of the simplest forms of this. I give a typical example:

I once asked a patient how she dared to tell me so many falsehoods, and she replied with all calmness: "Doesn't everybody commit sins of some kind?" Very soon after I had to tax her with the same fault again. "One or other of us must be telling a lie," I said. "Well," she answered, "I certainly am not."

This person was in very poor circumstances, and I had collected a certain sum of money for her, which I gave to her in small quantities as I knew she required it. When I had come to the end of the amount she went around telling all who would listen to her that I had received a good deal more than I had given her. In order to convince her of my honesty I showed her the accounts I had kept. "Oh, you can write whatever you like there," she said, with a shrug of the shoulders. I found that no proof could make her change her views. It may be that she hoped to extort from me a further allowance. When once I asked her to sign a receipt for money that I had given her, she rushed away pretending to be overcome by a nervous attack.

She never gave up calling to see me, and on one occasion I took advantage of her presence to let the doctor read letters that I had received on the subject

of her untruthfulness. I was entirely disappointed in my hope of making an impression upon the woman, for she spoke to the doctor just as she had done to me. As he knew her he soon gave up trying to bring home to her the seriousness of her conduct. He eventually came to the decision that she should not be allowed in the establishment. In spite of the threat the patient continued to give the same trouble, until the authorities were so much inconvenienced by her intrigues, lying, and calumny that they had to dismiss her.

Besides such simple forms, there are others to be met with in hysterical subjects, amounting to actual ravings, and these are often regular in occurrence. Hatred, jealousy, and persecution of others may thus be found in very acute forms, and perhaps oftener than is commonly supposed. Innocent people may often be victimized through these passions, more especially under conditions in which the particular maladies we are treating of are not understood.

By a good many people hysteria is set down as a form of madness or of shamelessness, or both together. And with this false idea abroad it is not possible to tell a woman that she is hysterical. To avoid any insult she is told that she is *nervous*. And in some cases even this is too strong—one can only say she has weak nerves or she is anæmic.

In consequence of the conduct of some patients in their bad attacks—of their romantic temperament, or perhaps chiefly owing to mistakes made in the early observation of hysteria—the false and unwarranted opinion has taken hold of some minds that

hysterical women are necessarily lacking in modesty and purity. This imputation is absolutely without foundation. Dr. Legrand du Saulle says: "In this matter hysterical patients have been much calumniated: their affliction is in no way connected with sensuality. The most chaste and pure may contract hysteria, which is a nervous malady that has nothing to do with the sensual appetites." Dr. Gilles de la Pourrette adds: "The disorder is psychical or mental, and not physical."[1]

Whilst some patients are quite harmless, others may be most dangerous both to themselves and others, inasmuch as they are capable of almost any misdeed. One of this class, on coming to the establishment, requested that I would visit her, as she was obliged to keep to her bed for several weeks. As is usual with the patients, she wished to impress upon me that she was an enigma—she was entirely unlike any other case. I tried to make her understand that I knew full well the nature of her illness. When I repeated this on the day that she was leaving she assured me that no one there had understood her case. She was right in a sense. Only a few days after her departure we learnt that she had spread shocking insinuations about a priest. So repulsive were these stories that I could not have believed the person capable of originating them, if I had not received it on the best authority. It was plain that the priest in question had incurred her displeasure by refusing to satisfy her whims and fancies, and by dealing more severely with her than she liked.

[1] *Traité de l'Hystérie*, 1891.

After this case I was forced to admit that in spite of all I knew from reading of these cases, and of what I had learned from doctors, not to speak of personal experience, I still had much to learn in the matter of diagnosing these maladies. I had only to conclude that I was to be surprised at nothing from our patients, and to say as a doctor friend of mine said when he had been seriously taken in by one of his clients: "It is not the first time I have been deceived, and it will probably not be the last." One must ever be expecting surprises from these patients. The person mentioned above was by no means mentally deranged, and was a person of good education; she knew Latin, and spoke several modern languages.

It has been my sincere desire to place all these considerations in their proper setting, and to defend the victims of these neurotic evils, especially those sufferers that have been so calumniated. At the same time it has been my wish to instruct my readers who may have to deal with these difficult cases, hoping thereby to spare them many troubles, and to save them from the need of buying the experience which others have acquired at so painful a cost. It is very true here to say that forewarned is forearmed. These practical considerations have led me to dwell a little upon this aspect of the matter, though it does not enter directly into the subject in hand. The consideration is so complex that it can only be touched upon in passing.

In spite of all deceptions and annoyances, no one can venture to condemn all hysterical patients together, or make it a rule to treat them with

severity. There is no lack of other infirmities that are more simply dealt with to which we may give attention and help. But that should not hinder us from bestowing time and sympathy upon this. Those afflicted with hysteria are really to be reckoned among the sick, and to be counted as most deserving of Christian sympathy—the more so as their need of sympathy is greater than in other ailments, and as they are, from the nature of the case, liable to meet with less. Moreover, not a few of these patients are capable of being led to utilize their lives for much good. It must be recognized that these sufferers are laden with a cross, often of great burden, and wherever we find the cross we must revere it.

On the other hand, if one has always to be on one's guard in treating with hysterical subjects, to watch them in a specially close manner, and hesitate to accept their assertions—in a word, if all possible prudence has to be used with regard to them, that does not mean that charity is in any way limited or lessened. Real charity not only does not exclude prudence, but rather makes it a greater obligation. Our Lord says: "Be ye prudent as serpents and simple as doves."[1] We must here put in practice the *fortiter* and *suaviter* of Wisdom.[2] Whilst with our patients we must endeavour to be gentle and kind, on the other hand it is essential that we show an unwavering firmness. To carry this out great tact will certainly be required.

Generally speaking, too much prudence cannot be used when there is any question of one with symp-

[1] Matt. x. 16. [2] Wisd. viii. 1.

toms of hysteria wishing to enter the religious state. If the applicant is well on in years and has suffered severe attacks of hysteria, the idea should not be entertained. And though there may not have been any strong physical indications, it is necessary to be very cautious when there is any trace of mental disposition to the malady.[1]

The question of admission into a religious Order is often complex and hard to decide. But the question of marriage is perhaps more so, and marriage has not the safeguard of a *novitiate*.

From observations that have been made on the influence of marriage upon hysterical persons, competent physicians conclude that in the cases studied, and they are numerous, the majority have not improved after marriage. They are inclined not to sanction marriage except after complete cure. These studies have at all events disproved what was at one time a common aphorism: "Nubet puella et morbus effugiet" (Let the person marry and her ailment will cease).

"In the case of hysteria," says Dr. Grasset, "medical men should at once oppose the maxim, current in certain circles and even with some doctors, —namely, that marriage should be prescribed to hysterical subjects as a means to cure them. The desired effect is too uncertain to risk the evil that is likely to result. It is necessary to consider carefully whether the particular case of hysteria is

[1] On this subject there is a very practical work, though perhaps a little old, by the Abbé Touronde: *l'Hystérie*, La Chapelle Montligeon. It contains some very excellent directions.

compatible with marriage or not. If the malady be of recent contraction, not serious and not hereditary, and if the person wishes to enter the marriage state, doctors might then authorize it with the advice that the mode of life of the young person, as also the training of the children, should be made the object of special care under medical supervision.

On the other hand, a doctor's authority should be obtained, if not to forbid altogether, at least to postpone long enough to effect a cure, the marriage of one who suffers from severe hysteria that is hereditary or of long standing.

In doubtful cases and in all that may be classed between the two extremes, regard should be had to the temperament and health of the other party. If he is of nervous temperament also, one should be much more slow to counsel marriage than if he were of a stronger disposition."[1]

This advice, which Dr. Grasset addresses to doctors, deserves the attention of the layman as well, since it deals with a highly important matter of conscience and morality.

We will conclude this chapter by submitting to the reader the authoritative opinion of Dr. Fiessinger. "One of the most efficacious means of cure," he says, "is the return to religious belief. This it is that can ensure calmness of soul and an internal force to resist every shock of emotion—effects that are certainly not to be despised. Faith in the Divine impresses upon the mind a number of truths that

[1] *Thérapeutique des Maladies du Système Nerveux, op. cit.*, chap. ii.

cannot be gainsaid. It sinks deep in our nature the eternal fixed foundations of all things. Then does the mind rest upon the rock: the storms of life can never move it."[1]

[1] *Erreurs Sociales et Maladies Modernes*, *op. cit.*, 4e partie, chap. ii. *Cf.* Briquet, *Traité Clinique de l'Hystérie:* Paris, 1839. Brodie, *Leçons sur les Affections Nerveuses Locales*, in *Progrès Médical*, 1879, 1880. Guinon, *Les Agents Provocateurs de l'Hystérie:* Thèse de Paris, 1889.

CHAPTER III

ON PSYCHASTHENIA

THE mental troubles which we have considered are not ordinarily to be found in neurasthenic patients. But they constitute the mental state of another class of sufferers, who are both numerous and very much to be pitied—the victims, namely, of psychasthenia.

An eminent French authority on this matter, Mons. P. Janet, includes a number of morbid states of mind under this name, such as deranged ideas in the matter of touch, inordinate doubts and misgivings, agoraphobia, etc. All these forms of affliction have been regarded as separate maladies up till recent times, although all present the same symptoms—obsessions, fears, various forms of mania, and involuntary movements, and all arise from the same cause, which is psychical or mental weakness; or, to use the expression of M. Janet, *La diminution de la tension psychologique*.

We will here describe the various symptoms, indicating the distinction between these and the signs of other nervous disorders. Then in considering their cause we will proceed to suggest the proper treatment.

I. Obsession.

Obsession may be described as an idea that recurs automatically or mechanically and involuntarily, and forces itself irresistibly on the consciousness, in spite of all efforts to banish it. Further, this idea causes pain and provokes various impulses.

It is automatic in the sense that it presents itself to the mind when least expected—as, for example, during sleep, which may be completely overcome by it; or at the time of some act which is of an opposite tendency—thus, impure or blasphemous obsessions may haunt an individual at his prayers or at the time of receiving the Sacraments.

It is involuntary because, far from being sought after, it is combated by the patient as being quite opposed to his education, his manner of life, and his natural tastes and sentiments. A, for example, is obsessed with a fear of being led to kill the child upon which she dotes. Holding the infant near a table she has frightful thoughts of striking its head against the corner. B, again, though a thoroughly good Christian, constantly finds her mind turning upon blasphemous thoughts, or imagines that she has sinful desires in regard of the persons she meets. She is not certain how far these go, but fears that in the end she will give way. A governess writes thus: "It seems to me to be impossible for me to go to Confession any more, for every time I approach the confessional I am more inclined to break out into blasphemy and imprecations against God than to make my confession, or excite myself to contrition. If only I had someone

here capable of giving me advice in my despair. . . ." Such letters are of only too frequent recurrence. Here is an example of an extreme case of obsession:

The patient after Holy Communion often imagines that a white object upon the floor is the Host, which must have fallen from his mouth. Or after Confession he will be filled with anxiety as to the sufficiency of his contrition or the integrity of his accusation. He may even doubt whether he actually went to Confession, and will appeal to other penitents to know if they saw him enter the confessional. When he has to make a purchase, he fears that he has not paid the full amount, or that he has stolen the money he still has. If an object has been lost he wonders whether he has taken it. He hears of a suicide or a murder, and if he happens to be in the same town he is seized with fear that he may have been the cause of the death. At the news of a building having been maliciously set on fire he is tortured with the thought that he may have done it unless the culprit is arrested. He receives a considerable amount of money, and then perhaps whilst paying a bill he sees someone with a purse, and the suggestion comes to him that he has taken the money from the purse. He is often deluded with the idea that he has done some injury to any unknown person he meets in the course of his walk, and will watch to see whether that person goes quietly on his way.

If he has occasion to take food of any kind to a sick person and the patient afterwards gets worse, he asks whether he must not have been the cause. If in the course of his walks he sees a person standing

near water, he is afterwards terrified with the thought that he may have pushed that person into the water, and will return again and again to the spot, only to find his anxiety increased at not seeing his supposed victim. Whenever he hears of a death he examines himself as to whether he may have injured the person and so caused the death. If he happens to go into the kitchen on a Friday he thinks he sees the remains of meat in the plates and dishes, and holds himself responsible if anyone should have violated the law of abstinence. If a person mentions a loss, he considers himself obliged to make it good out of his own belongings if he can do so. After merely passing by a shop he thinks he may have purloined something. Going away from here on one occasion, he saw a lady in mourning at the station, and on inquiry learned that her sister was dead. When he arrived at his destination, he wrote to ask me whether he had been the cause of this person's death.

All these fears and anxieties continue until this patient is able to speak to his confessor or to some other person who has his confidence and understands his case, and so offers to take all responsibility for his actions and his disquiet. Each time that he goes to Holy Communion he waits at the chapel door in order to tell me all his fears and get advice as to what he should do. A mere word is enough to reassure him, and never did he hesitate to accept my answers. He always showed the most perfect obedience—a very rare thing with this class of patients. At the same time, there was nothing in his conduct to make one suspect the mental tortures

he endured, and his conversation was perfectly reasonable, apart from the matter of his fears.

Another example is that of a student who comes to seek advice concerning his state, and expresses himself in these terms: "Whenever I think of Our Lord or of Our Lady I am assailed by unclean thoughts and blasphemies in spite of myself, and in spite of all the resistance that I can make. I know I do not consent to these, because I keep saying to myself that I will not give way, and I repeat again and again the most sacred words I can think of in honour of God and His blessed Mother. These thoughts attack me chiefly in the morning when I awake and at the time of my prayer, so that prayer is rather a source of discouragement than consolation to me. Still I never give up either my prayers nor the regular reception of the Sacraments. This state of mind at times causes me such sadness and desolation that I fear I must go out of my mind. . . ."

The fact of the *obsession* is quite clear to the patient—that is to say, he is conscious of it, and fights against it by reasonings, efforts, and struggles of all kinds. Some sufferers make use of exterior actions to repel their troubles: they shake their heads or make gestures expressive of disgust. Some make their protestations aloud. "No, never! How shameful! What an abominable thought!" . . . . and suchlike expressions are heard from them. Or others will fall on their knees, and strike themselves—even hurting themselves—whilst they blame themselves and declare they must be responsible for their unhappy state. Many are constantly calling upon God, our Blessed Lady, their Guardian

Angel, and the Saints to whom they have a special devotion to obtain deliverance. Then others, again, are always making promises, vows,[1] and engagements. They impose upon themselves severe penances and long fasts, and deprive themselves of what is strictly necessary for them, and thus completely ruin the little health that remains to them, if they are not watched in a very special manner. In one case I succeeded in getting a patient to give up the use of a cincture studded with iron points, which she had been using until her pain became almost intolerable. Many patients have recourse to similar means in order to overcome temptations or to punish themselves on account of them. Some have assured me that they did so with the leave of their confessor, but they had usually gone much farther than they were advised, as these sufferers are liable to do. In any case, had the said confessors understood their penitents they would have strictly forbidden what they may only have permitted, because these austerities only excite the nerves and aggravate the morbid state of the patients without any hope of ever obtaining the desired result.

D, who has a horror of sin, makes all sorts of promises in order to overcome the fear of falling into some sin. She will take her bath at four o'clock precisely; if she is a few minutes late she must go to the Sacraments on the following day. She must never walk on blue stones, because blue is Our Lady's colour. She has to try on new clothes,

[1] These patients usually make no distinction between a promise and a vow. The confessor should bear this in mind.

and chooses Saturday to do so in honour of Our Lady. If she fails in her promises, she thinks she has committed a sin, and must go to the Sacraments. Then at each of her Communions she becomes obsessed with the fear that she may have received sacrilegiously, because she did not prepare sufficiently, or overlooked some sin, or did not excite herself to sorrow, etc.

E, another patient, spends nearly all day and part of the night washing her hands, as a means of combating the idea that she may have entertained the desire of seeing a neighbour eternally lost. She carefully preserves her fallen hair, she is careful to take the buttons off her linen before sending it to the laundry, and will never cut her nails—because nothing of hers must remain in the institution in which she is undergoing treatment.

None of these strange proceedings ever have the effect of calming these poor sufferers. And the reasonings and inferences they make merely strengthen the association of morbid ideas and intensify the malady. I can testify that I have given no end of advice and recommendation to these people, but usually without much effect.

I will give one other example to illustrate the lamentable state to which obsession may lead if it be not rightly dealt with at the outset.

Mademoiselle G. is a rich and pious lady about fifty years of age, who is thoroughly well educated, and holds a high social position at X. She was always scrupulous from the early age of fourteen or fifteen, her troubles being always connected with the Sacred Host. Her difficulties began in this way. In one

of the Communions of her childhood the Host became attached to the roof of the mouth, and she ventured to remove it with her finger. This was enough to give rise to scruples. Not long after she heard an account of a person vomiting the Sacred Host after Communion. The remembrance of these facts never left her, and ever since Communion has become for her a veritable torture. She received but seldom, and always avoided anyone who had just been to Communion. Up to the age of thirty-eight she approached the Sacraments of Confession and Communion only very rarely—hardly two or three times in the year, and then in the greatest trouble of mind.

About twelve years ago she placed herself under the guidance of a new director, who, by his untiring patience, seems to have succeeded in so far allaying the fears of the good lady as to enable her to approach the Sacraments once a month.

But even so, she usually causes the greatest disturbance in her household on the eve of her Confession and Communion. She must that day refrain from making or receiving visits. An hour before midnight she is busy washing her face and rinsing her mouth to be quite sure that there will be no danger of swallowing anything and so break her fast. This continues up till twelve o'clock. A maid must remain with her to assure her that there is nothing on her lips or in her mouth. Another maid has to keep guard near the clock in order to give notice when it is exactly midnight. Naturally Mademoiselle G. spends the night in a state of great agitation. Then at 6.30 she rises, and with the

attendance of her servants recommences all her various precautions. But she must not wash for fear she might swallow some water, and she even avoids handling anything that is damp. If the weather is wet this causes her fresh anxiety. She sets apart special clothes, sponges, cups, and serviettes, etc., for use on these days.

After about two hours she drives to the chapel, where her confessor is waiting by appointment. But first she must always see him in the parlour, in order to settle a thousand doubts that have arisen since she began her preparations on the previous evening. She then makes her immediate preparation, lasting about twenty minutes, before entering the confessional, and at the end of the confession she is usually troubled with the thought that her contrition is insufficient, and the confessor is obliged at last to command her to go and receive Holy Communion. Not infrequently it happens that she declares even after the *Confiteor* that she feels a particle of food at the back of the mouth. When the moment of Communion arrives she appears to be quite beside herself, her whole frame being in a state of feverish agitation. After receiving she closes her mouth tight, raises her head, and as soon as she is in her place looks at the clock in order to make sure that she will spend a full half-hour in thanksgiving. She is unable to pray, but remains all the time on her knees with her head raised.

At the end of the half-hour the confessor goes to call her. Her conversation at once turns upon her difficulties and doubts—perhaps she has not swallowed the Sacred Host, and so on. She repeats the

same things over and over again, and keeps the priest engaged with her troubles for the greater part of the morning. This scene has taken place regularly every month for the last ten years. On one occasion, after having received Holy Communion, this poor sufferer remained for a whole hour with her head thrown back and as though seized with some affection of the throat. When she was approached, she wrote on a slip of paper: "I have not been able to swallow the Host; I can feel it in my throat." On the assurance of the priest that it could not be, she was enabled to give up the delusion.

This case will afford some idea of the difficulty a priest has to encounter in such ministrations. It is no wonder if he becomes perplexed himself, and considers that the patient is going her own way instead of accepting the confessor's advice. Mademoiselle G. has been often advised to see specialists, to go through a course of treatment in some establishment under the direction of a competent medical man, but she will never give any heed to such suggestions. She says she relies on God alone, and on His working a miracle in her favour. By way of change a pilgrimage has been suggested, but she becomes irritable and flatly refuses.

Her confessor has certainly placed at the service of this soul a fund of knowledge, experience, and devotedness, only to arrive at a mere negative result, for her state is as bad as ever, or perhaps worse.

In such a case only one remedy is of any avail, and that is complete separation from her actual surroundings and special treatment in a sanatorium

under competent medical direction. For these states which border so closely on actual madness are never cured by psychotherapy alone; physical treatment must be used as well as mental.

II. Psychasthenia, as Distinct from Neurasthenia, Hysteria, and Madness.

From what has been said, it will be easy to distinguish the characteristics of psychasthenic obsession from that of other forms of nerve trouble. It fixes itself upon the consciousness of the patient like a parasite, causing pain, and is always resisted.

In neurasthenia, on the contrary, the patient seems to find satisfaction in his idea, which he elaborates constantly with an endless wealth of detail. He suffers from it, often constantly and to a terrible degree, but yet he continually dilates upon it. If only he can find a hearer, he will continue to talk about it, even though he knows it to be troublesome and disagreeable. In a word, with the neurasthenic, obsession is *voluntary*, and very often bears all the marks of hypochondriac preoccupation.

In madness obsession is *unconscious*, and completely absorbed and assimilated in the personality. The madman clings to his fixed idea all the more strongly as it becomes the basis of all the workings of his mind, and so he will defend it with violence and even homicide.

In hysteria also the fixed idea is in the same way taken up or assimilated in the subconsciousness of the patient, but it does not extend to the psycho-

logical consciousness. The moment that it is realized by the full consciousness of the personality it is rejected. We may take for example a case of paralysis. If it be shown to the subject that his paralysis arises from an idea that he lacks the power of motion, or if, by applying an electric treatment to the affected part, he can be persuaded that he is suffering from muscular contraction, or, again, if his delusion be brought home to him by some sudden shock, the real cause of the paralysis will be evident at once.

Another characteristic of psychasthenic obsession is that it is *irresistible*. Thus, as we have already said, the obsession is all the more readily contracted as it attacks the most intimate sentiments of the individual. And so the patient will experience the greater need of allaying his fears and of going to extremes to make sure that he has not committed some evil, or that he will not be led to do so. Thus one will fret and weep with disappointment if forbidden to wash. Another will be prepared to transgress all the laws of the Church in order to fulfil some absurd promise. In other cases patients will not stop at criminal actions when they wish to achieve some purpose which they suppose to be of importance. We know of a wife who caused her husband's death in order to be able to marry another who would be better able to support her and her children.

We will not treat of the *pain* occasioned by these obsessions. One must have assisted at the scenes of bitter despair in order to realize it more fully. No pen could do more than give but a faint description

compared with the frightful reality. Besides, we have said something on this point in the chapter on Neurosis.

It may well be understood that such afflictions may easily drive patients to the worst extremities. As a matter of fact, various *impulses* follow upon obsession, though usually the impulse is not of a dangerous character. In very few cases does the psychasthenic patient carry his impulse into execution, and this for several reasons. First he is apprehensive about the action to which he is impelled. He wants to make sure about it by every possible means, often of the most childish nature. Thus he takes a long time to decide about the closing of a door or a window. Then, if he begins the act, he draws back as soon as it appears dangerous, simply because it is opposed to his better self, as we have said. And in the third place the execution of his idea is stayed by the lack of will-power, which affects the whole range of consciousness and acts as a drag upon his power of action.

III. Involuntary Movements.

Victims of psychasthenia are subject to other psychological troubles, besides obsession, which are equally irresistible. These are numerous forms of *fears*, *manias*, and disturbances called by Monsieur Janet *agitations forcées*, and known by the German name of "Zwangsvorstellungen." These may be described as phenomena which have the effect of using up in a lower form of activity the nervous force which is not sufficient for activity of a higher

order—say, an act of the will. It is something like the effect of a low-voltage accumulator in a motor-car. The current will not be sufficient to cause the explosion in the cylinder of the machine, but will produce that short-circuiting which is of no use to put the automobile in motion, may even be dangerous, and at the same time consumes the power of the accumulator. Somewhat in the same way does the psychasthenic patient use up his psychical energy in mental exercises and discussions which are both fruitless and childish. These patients are constantly overwhelmed with questionings. Why do men walk? Why are the trees green? How is it that water is wet? and so on. Before performing an action, they will hesitate and doubt, and consider it from all points of view and in its results, and then perhaps fail to carry out what they proposed. Just as much fatigue results from all this as if they had been busily employed; and besides, they suffer from discouragement at the fruitlessness of their efforts.

In this same category of afflictions comes the mania for order and precision, for asking questions and raising doubts. J, before retiring for the night, goes quite naturally to kiss her children, but she must return again and again in order to make sure that she has done so. Then she must go round the room several times to see that all is in place, that the blinds are well drawn, and so forth. Hardly has she closed the door when she begins to wonder if she saw to all details, and so returns once more to make sure that she has forgotten nothing, when she begins all over again. It is useless for her to try and reason against all these acts to which she

is uncontrollably forced. It always seems that the health of her children is at stake. She is convinced that if she resists, some evil will befall them, and she will find them ill or dead in the morning.

K cannot bear to see an irregular fold in the linen, or a line that is not quite straight, or, again, unfinished words at the end of a line of print. When reading a book or paper, he has his pen or pencil always ready to complete the word in the place of the hyphen, and to cross out the part carried into the next line. Punctuation marks and accents are also the subject of his most careful scrutiny and correction. Printers, folders, and binders all fall under his complaints. Nor do the writers themselves escape his criticism. He notes a want of logic or clearness through faulty punctuation, or division of chapters or paragraphs. Such faults will make it impossible for him to read some works. The only result of all this careful verification and precision is to tire and unnerve the patient.

L has also a mania for order. The objects which adorn his mantelpiece must always be exactly in the same place or they will fall. M is always looking at himself in the mirror in order to make sure that his tie is straight. For the same reason he is always fingering his tie. When he sees a notice in the street he soon doubts whether he has read it aright. He retraces his steps, reads it again and again, and, after all, still has doubts concerning it.

A mania of this kind often causes involuntary movements—an effect of a lower order still. Thus one is troubled by an evil thought and strikes his elbow against the wall or kicks one leg with the other

by way of punishment. Elsewhere we speak of the various movements adopted by patients to rid themselves of their troublesome thoughts. These may be called defensive impulses (*tics de défense*). Others are for improvement (*tics de perfectionnement*). The patients are not satisfied with the execution of some action and repeat it a certain number of times consecutively. Sometimes these movements are not of any special form, but constantly varied so that they constitute a real attack of convulsions.

Finally, through a chance association of ideas, sentiments, objects, or recollections, those various fears will arise which have received Greek names and have been regarded as separate maladies. Thus we get zoophobia, or fear of animals; microbiophobia, the fear of microbes; agoraphobia, fear of space; toxicophobia, fear of poisons, etc.

O, whilst out walking, comes in contact with a mad dog. He begins at once to think he has been bitten. Not content with one examination, he is continually looking to see if he bears any sign of the bite, and the slightest scratch or wound will give rise to fears that are quite unreasonable. The moment he sees a dog he gets out of its way with all possible haste, because if the dog happened to have rabies, even the wind might carry the dreaded infection to him.

P, whilst driving, happened to be disagreeably impressed at the sight of a dirty cloth. She went home and washed herself thoroughly because she may have touched this object. Her clothes, too, had to be cleaned and various things that may have come in contact with them, as the toilet accessories

and the basins in which the washing had been performed. This fear became an obsession, and the unfortunate patient was constantly impelled to carry out these ablutions without any respite.

Q must go into the open air to comb her hair, in her great concern for the cleanliness of her room. She continually washes the furniture and upholstering for fear they might be contaminated by microbes. Her anxiety also extends to others who may suffer from microbes. On one occasion she was found carefully cleaning the clothes of a lady who was a perfect stranger to her.

R, whose mantle happened to brush against a packet of arsenic in a chemist's shop, begs people not to come too near to her lest they should be poisoned. One day some ice slipped from her hand and came in contact with the mantle in falling to the ground, and as it was dark the pieces could not be gathered up. Terrified at the thought that children might pick up some portion of this and be poisoned, she came to me to know how she could prevent such a danger.

Apprehensions of this sort follow upon one another without any interruption, so that this poor victim is constantly consulting doctors and coming to me for advice. Her daughter, who is always with her, can do nothing to allay her fears, and does not like to admit that we are more successful.

Fear, or phobia, of this kind may also extend to various matters in the one patient, and then becomes a state of general anxiousness, which is the source of much affliction and demands immediate treatment.

IV. Mental Deficiency in Psychasthenia.

We come to a third class of troubles, which are the certain mark of psychasthenia. They are what Monsieur Janet calls *stigmates psychasthéniques*. The affected persons are gauche, timid, and overcome by a sense of inferiority in the presence of others. Their movements are hurried and awkward, their bearing clumsy or hesitating. Thus S can never perform an action as complete as he would wish. He feels that everybody is looking at him; he hesitates, and at length leaves the action incomplete. And yet he is a person of parts—musical and artistic ; but he is paralyzed with the feeling of inferiority, and he never can adapt himself to circumstances.

A patient once wrote to tell me she wished to come to our institute, but she held back because she feared anything like singularity; she felt she would be alone, and would be regarded with curiosity and criticism. I was able to assure her that she might set her mind at rest on this point, since even if the patients here walked on all fours, no one would pay the slightest heed, precisely because so many eccentricities were to be found here.

This deficiency—called by Monsieur Janet *incomplétude*—affects the mental as well as external functions. The power of attention is often lacking, so that all work becomes extremely painful. T, whilst reading, stops at every word of which he thinks he may not have grasped the full sense. He deliberates whether the author has used the precise term, and at the end of a paragraph he will stop for

a long time in order to make sure of its connection with what has gone before.

Then, the will is seriously affected; in fact, the almost complete absence of will-power is one of the surest signs of psychasthenia. Very often these patients are reproached for their bad will, but this is quite a mistake, because *they are not able to will.* Their power of sentiment is also lessened. Patients will often complain of not being able to *feel* as formerly; they have become indifferent. And some have been known to put to themselves some such test as whether the death of some near relative would make them weep. Further, they often have an impression of living two different lives at once, or to be no longer themselves, etc. In some cases they seem to think of nothing at all, and to suffer a sort of "mental eclipse." U, finding herself in a drawing-room, rushes to embrace a gentleman who is a stranger to her. She fails to recognize her husband in the street, although she has arranged to meet him at a certain place, and he has passed her by two or three times.

Such are the symptoms which indicate the nervous weakness of psychasthenia. The poor afflicted victims can do nothing of themselves, and whilst they are terrified at the thought of any effort, they feel most keenly the need of affection, guidance, assurance, and, above all, consolation. Some of them, after a period of agitation, usually followed by one of depression, have recourse to the use of rum or strong coffee; whilst many, taking to morphine, ether, or other drugs, complicate this already serious condition by an almost constant state of intoxication.

From the physical point of view there is nothing to be observed in psychasthenia beyond those symptoms of nervous weakness of which we treat whilst speaking of neurasthenia—namely, a feeling of extreme lassitude, various bodily pains, like headaches, and certain internal troubles that arise from weakness of the digestive organs.

We pass now to a consideration of the development and actual nature of psychasthenia. A case has been brought to our notice of a child who, after an attack of diphtheria at five years of age, formed the habit of continually washing her hands. At the time of her First Communion she suffered from scruples, which after a few years became a constant obsession. The smallest incident or the slightest contradiction was enough to bring about various morbid phenomena. Thus it usually happens. The shy and timid child may soon become scrupulous, and thence may easily develop some obsession. The affliction takes a decided form, and various troubles follow like links in a chain, more or less rapidly. Attacks of nervous trouble will be followed by periods of calm; but the patients will always experience a sense of restraint, inferiority, and mental incapacity. If they are not looked after in a careful and intelligent manner, the periods of calm soon grow less frequent, obsessions increase until any form of social life becomes impossible, and the illness becomes chronic.

The question whether psychasthenia may develop into madness is one which the patients often put to themselves, and in most cases readily answer in the affirmative. They consider that their state

must end in madness, if they have not already reached it.

Whilst the victims of psychasthenia solve the question after their usual pessimistic manner, they would wish to be reassured that they are wrong. This we have attempted to do where, speaking of the character of obsession, we have indicated the chief and essential differences between the obsession of the psychasthenic and the fixed idea of the madman. We will not return to that matter again. But we would insist upon this point, that, even in the most serious cases, psychasthenic patients retain almost unimpaired all their mental functions. For the rest, we can only say that conjecture as to the development of the affliction must vary very much according to the degree of the malady, and it may be much more serious if it be hereditary. But in any case careful treatment applied in good time always produces a sensible amelioration, and very often complete cure. Of this many examples are well known to the author.

We mentioned heredity because it is this which plays so important a part in the genesis of this evil. Nerve-afflicted patients transmit a defective nervous system to their offspring—a system which sooner or later will fail to function properly.

Then, mistakes in the rearing of children, whether on the side of severity or of softness, intensify the dispositions to morbidity. Errors in moral as well as physical hygiene and all excesses in moral and physical training are fruitful causes of the development of the malady.

Prudence, therefore, would discourage marriages

between persons that are related, as between nervous subjects or victims to the use of strong drinks and drugs. The rearing of children demands very special attention. Every child should be encouraged to develop initiative, instead of having its faculties cramped by restraint and all kinds of preoccupations. A boy of ten, who was under special treatment on account of delusions regarding his food, was able to recognize that his trouble was in great part due to his mother's method of treating him. He used to say : " Mother, this is your fault; you were always saying to me : ' Jean, do not eat this, and be careful of that.' I know now that you deprived me of things that were good for me, and so made me ill." The child had no knowledge of the taste of fruits, and when they were given to him, he always asked to have them carefully peeled, so that he should not be poisoned by the skins.

Great importance must be set upon the moral side of training. " It is obvious," writes Père Weiss, " that all external activity, moral conduct, piety, and art must be directed by a rightly trained mind. But it is unfortunate to realize that there is real need to insist that with the mere training of the intellect, nothing more is done than to lay the first groundwork of a formation of character, complete and worthy of man's nature. Therefore it is of the highest importance for humanity that education should direct the attention towards those things that are truly good, exalted, and useful. But it is no less important that it should at the same time inspire the heart with a lasting enthusiasm for these same objects. If we would have strong minds,

characters that are highly tempered, and hearts that are capable of making sacrifices and showing enthusiasm for all that is sublime and noble, we must introduce serious improvements into the education and personal training of youth.

"In both we must oppose that harmful cultivation of the vague and indefinite, and of the numerous branches of knowledge, and direct our efforts towards depth of knowledge. We must cultivate the inmost part of the soul, the keen edge of the mind—in a word, the interior man."[1]

Dr. Fiessinger insists no less strongly upon the need of this training. "The moral sense," he says, "exercises a constant influence on the physical state. A child who has been brought up badly in a moral sense is exposed as a prey to all vices and loss of bodily health. 'An education confined solely to the intellect and reason is necessarily a depraved form of education,' says J. Bourdeau. On this point all philosophers are agreed. Only those who love to fill their minds with Utopian ideas can think otherwise.

"There is much talk of reforms. Here is one that should be effected, though it cannot be brought about all at once. To dethrone reason, we are told, is to instal sentiment in its place, and sentiment opens the way to religions.[2] This is not precisely the object of our intellectual outlook. The mass of the people is led by the great names of truth and justice. But in practice they are led on to error,

[1] *Apologie du Christianisme*, ix., "La Perfection."

[2] Faith must be accompanied by charity. But the act of charity is an act of the will, not a mere sentiment.

and this error causes deplorable reactions on our social life. Can it be supposed that juvenile crime, which has increased tenfold in the last fifteen years, would have reached such proportions unless it had been promoted by such unwholesome and absurd principles as now obtain. Reason alone inspires but one code of morality—that of the appetites—and therefore every doctrine deriving from that source only bears the stamp of discredit and sterility."[1]

Again, the nourishment of the child must be carefully watched, but it must not be confined to one or two classes of food. There should be no excitants, little flesh meat, but plenty of vegetables and fruit. This is a simple but excellent rule, and one that is necessary for the preservation of health.[2]

Above all, a careful moral training is of the utmost importance. Parents must never forget that the mind of the child is a blank, but ready to receive impressions of all it sees and hears. Fénelon said, with reason, that in a receptacle so small there is only room for the very best.

It is beyond doubt that very often cases of nerve trouble become more acute and develop into madness because the patient has not been placed under discipline, or has himself refused to submit to it. Any passion that is not restrained may end in loss of reason.

[1] *Erreurs Sociales et Maladies Mentales*, 3e partie chap. i.

[2] *Cf. Le Guide de la Jeune Mère*. A booklet (45 pages) which is strongly recommended to mothers who would exercise special care as to the health of their children. Edited by J. Favrichon, pharmacien-chimiste, à Saint-Symphorien-de-Lay (Loire), France.

The Sacrament of Penance, inasmuch as it confers grace, is most efficacious in rendering the soul victorious over its inordinate inclinations, and making it capable of subduing and ruling them. "True penance," says St. Thomas, "not only takes away past sins, but also preserves man from future falls."[1] Besides this supernatural action, the Sacrament of Penance has another effect, which is in some sense natural. The child learns to examine its actions and judge of its motives, to watch over itself so as not to fall again into evil, to restrain the impulses of passion, to ward off evil thoughts and imaginations, and all that wandering of the mind which arouses and feeds the passions. It is easy to see that by this means the Sacrament may be most efficacious to prevent the evils of morbid brooding on dangerous subjects, which often plays so great a part in nervous afflictions.

Holy Communion, too, is a remedy against the passions. "Although," says St. Thomas, "the body is not directly susceptible of grace, still the effect of grace overflows from the soul upon the body, because here below we must use our members 'as instruments of justice unto God' (Rom. vi. 13), according to the expression of St. Paul, and in the next life our body shall participate in the incorruptibility and glory of the soul."[2]

According to St. Cyprian, there is no remedy so powerful as frequent Communion to penetrate every portion of soul and body with health, cleansing, and newness of life.[3] Bossuet says that the

[1] P. 3, *Q* 84, *A*. 8, *Ad*. 1. [2] P. 3, *Q*. 79, *A*. 1, *Ad*. 3.
[3] *Epist. ad Fortun.*

Holy Eucharist is the strength of soul and body together.[1]

"This Divine nourishment," says St. John Chrysostom, "is the strength of our soul, the vigour of our mind, the bond and groundwork of our confidence, our hope, our salvation, our light, and our life. It inspires a great inclination towards all virtues, and zeal to practise them. It confers an abundance of joy and renders the road of perfection both sweet and easy."[2] St. Gregory the Great declares that it banishes the most inveterate of evils.[3]

And speaking of the body only, may we not expect that it will receive some effect from so great a Sacrament? The flesh strives against the spirit, and what can more effectually moderate the flesh than the Body of Jesus Christ when applied through this mystery? There is in our members a law which is in conflict with the law of the spirit, and what can better curb and place our members under the yoke than the Sacred Body of Christ? We must bear in our bodies the mortification of our Saviour, and who can better impress upon it that character, or better sanctify the pains of our afflicted body, than our Saviour Himself?

"At the time of Holy Communion," writes Mgr. Gerbet, "whilst the senses remain in the natural sphere, the soul has experience of the presence of another order. . . . Then within the soul effects are produced which human language refrains from describing for fear of profaning them. Suddenly

[1] *Méditations sur l'Évangile La Cène*, 1ère partie, 50e jour.
[2] *Homilia 24, sup. I. ad Corinth.* [3] *Epist. ad Mas.*

a deep silence takes the place of the murmur of the passions which is still heard in the faithful soul, like the last sound of the troubled life. Soon a stirring, powerful, yet gentle voice announces the presence of God, and straightway holy desires, and patience, and the spirit of sacrifice, all revive again after having grown perhaps very feeble; all that is Divine within the soul brightens up once more. Its outlook is brightened, and takes in some rays of that light which enlightens, and which is deeper down than the heart. Certain indefinable emotions, thrilling as sensations, and calm as ideas, attest the renewed harmony between spirit and sense. In a thousand other ways one experiences the joys of virtue, and it is then only that one tastes it in all its sweetness."[1]

We never could think we have done enough to convince our readers of the capital importance of the *early* and *frequent* use of these two Sacraments, which constitute the best of all preservatives against the evil we have been considering.

So much as regards precautionary measures. When once the malady has taken hold of a subject, it should be dealt with seriously and without delay. We refer our readers to the chapter which treats of this matter, and here we will only insist upon a few points of special importance.

Some victims of obsession, who are worn out by their continual but fruitless struggles against their fixed ideas, sometimes ask if it is not possible to relieve them by means of hypnotism. At first sight this would seem to be the natural remedy to adopt;

[1] *Dogme Générateur de la Piété Catholique.*

but it must be considered whether the treatment can be applied without incurring any danger. Now, victims of obsession are not fit subjects for hypnotism. Most of the trials that have been made have shown but little result. Besides, the subject is only rendered more liable to fixed ideas by hypnotism, so that when one is eliminated a crowd of others seem to take its place. This is the chief danger. In effect, the hypnotic state can only be induced by means of a division in the personality —a dissociation of psychical centres—to the detriment of the superior faculties, especially the will, and all to the strengthening of the lower automatic faculties. Hence this mode of treatment must be condemned, since, even if it were applicable, it would cause a disastrous effect upon faculties already weakened.

Déjerine is strongly opposed to the use of hypnotism in these cases. He writes thus: "All that the doctor does by the application of hypnotism is to develop the power of psychological automatism, which means the lessening of the value and intensity of the control exercised by the intellect. So that in great measure he is to be held responsible for that faculty of auto-suggestion which his patient acquires. The most extravagant ideas which cross the mind of the patient so treated are liable to be accepted as actual proved phenomena, without any reasoning upon them. Under the influence of repeated suggestions, the mind of the patient comes to form the habit of accepting without any personal control the notions that the will of another has tried to enforce. After this, why should

we expect that notions, once expelled from consciousness, should not return under the form of facts of memory, and be received as though they had been suggested—received, that is, just as hypnotic suggestions have been ?

Whatever may be said in its favour, the treatment by hypnotism, according to its very definition, is founded upon psychological automatism. And it tends to develop this automatism at the expense of the functions of conscience and judgment. Hypnotism is not a logical method except for those who believe in a narrow determinism of the mental functions, and who, denying the existence of higher psychical phenomena, regard the human mechanism as a tool which can be regulated or put out of order at will. We cannot subscribe to such theories. Hypnotism seems to us to hold the same relation to psychoneurosis that certain symptomatic remedies bear to, say, an infectious disease. What would be thought of a doctor who, in order to remedy one symptom—of fever, we will suppose—should prescribe remedies which, while lowering the temperature, at the same time decreased the patient's power of resistance to infection ?"[1]

What means, then, are to be employed to remedy the mental weakness of the patients ? They are *firm guidance* and a corresponding *obedience*—subjects on which we speak more at length elsewhere. Obedience will be gained in proportion as the director can inspire the patient with confidence.

[1] *Les Manifestations Fonctionelles des Psychonévroses. Leur Traitement par la Psychothérapie*, par J. Déjerine et E. Gauckler, 1911, 3e partie, chap. i.

This certainly is no easy matter, especially with those whose malady takes the form of *doubts*. "What proof have I that I ought to obey you?" one patient used to ask. "May I not be making a mistake in placing all trust in you?" The director must bring much patience, compassion, and kindness to his task, and impress upon his charge that he has everything to gain by following blindly the advice given to him. It will be well to explain to him that by carrying out this advice he will be enabled to throw off those painful ideas which embitter and cramp both the social and moral side of his life. Then, again, the director must make it clear that he accepts all responsibility for the consequence of the patient's acts, anxieties, and thoughts.

One's knowledge and experience of these cases must always be impressed upon the patients. Thus a patient might be addressed in these terms: "Do you doubt of my knowledge of all these troubles? What you tell me as something extraordinary I have heard from numbers of patients before, and I am constantly hearing the same story. For the very reason that I know these cases so well, I do not doubt what you say for one instant—and for the same reason I can readily sympathize with you. Hence I can heartily offer you my assistance to combat and vanquish these afflictions. But at the same time you must work with me at least by being entirely docile to my advice. I can do nothing unless you co-operate. We must have no examining and scrutinizing, no arguing or hesitating—and, above all, we must banish all *doubts*. I

take everything upon myself. The progress of the cure will be proportioned to the degree and readiness of your obedience. Only make a trial of it, and you will see for yourself how speedily all these *doubts* are put to flight. If you are prepared to act in this spirit, all responsibility falls upon me, and I am quite prepared to accept it without any reserve, so that you have no reason to disquiet yourself. You are responsible only for *not obeying*."

When the affliction takes the form of *fears* (phobia), one's attitude must be somewhat different. Déjerine and Gauckler wrote: "It has often seemed to us wiser to maintain a conspiracy of silence for some considerable time regarding these outbursts of *fear*. It is often better to adopt an attitude of unconcern than of direct opposition to these ideas. The patient should be removed from the surroundings and persons where the trouble first originated; he must avoid all that could recall it; he must never be allowed to talk of it—in a word, he must escape from the thought of it. This may be called the cowardly method, but it is the one which often succeeds best if previously the patient has gained some reassurance. When a series of new ideas and associations of different ideas have been taken in, the old associations will recur less vividly to the mind. The struggle will then become relatively easy, and will be deprived of those emotional phenomena which are so dangerous because they leave such a sense of depression."[1]

We make this quotation all the more readily as it agrees perfectly with our experience, as may

[1] *Op. cit.*, 3^{e} partie, chap. vii.

be seen from the chapter on the Treatment of Neurosis.

On these very simple lines the director may hope to stay that immense waste of energy employed in fruitless struggles. He will strongly oppose all dreaminess or brooding, which, besides being another cause of loss of mental energy, also prepares the way for an invasion of psychological troubles.

On the other hand, he must not be too exacting, and must be careful not to lower the patient's nervous tension by fatigue occasioned by efforts disproportionate to the small reserve of physical and mental force at his disposal. He must bear in mind that at the outset any form of argument is not only useless, but is often dangerous, because it may strengthen the patient's association of ideas.

Little by little he must strive to strengthen the will, and not till then can he urge his patient to act for himself, for it is only as he regains strength that he will find that he can exercise his will and discover how he is to do so. Meanwhile the physical treatment will have contributed its part to facilitate the reaction of the nerves. After some time the patient will be able to return to his ordinary course of life, with a consciousness of renewed physical, moral, and religious strength, and will realize his power over the evils which had called for such treatment.

He will be overjoyed at the dawning of this new life which he had come to believe he would never attain.

PART II

CHAPTER I

ON SCRUPLES

I. Nature and Origin.

The scruple consists of fear and trouble of soul, which cause a confusion between what is allowed and what is forbidden, between what is trivial and what is serious.

According to Dr. Surbled, "the scruple is a species of *phobia*—a morbid fear of sin, of eternal loss, of hell. The fear is erroneous and quite unreasonable, yet it gains a firm hold and dominates the soul. It may well be judged to be a real obsession. It arises from nervous trouble affecting the brain (encephalic), from neurosis, and must not be regarded as a mere disturbance of soul and conscience."[1]

Another writer, de Cazalés, says: "The scrupulous person presents one of the saddest cases to be found in the observation of human nature, and at the same time one of the most interesting to the psychologist. He is, however, always the torment of his spiritual

[1] *La Pensée Contemporaine*, March 25, 1906. It is agreeably surprising to find that besides theologians we have competent medical men and other students giving their attention in a serious manner to this grave question of scruples.

director, his medical adviser, or whomsoever he may have chosen as his confidant and guide."[1]

Father Quadrupani describes how scruples darken and weaken the mind, and deprive it of peace and calm; how they beget a spirit of obstinacy, lead to neglect of the Sacraments, and produce bad effects on bodily health. "How many people," he exclaims, "have gone from scruples into madness, or even into an abandoned life!"[2]

Everyone who enjoys good health, who is endowed with a well-balanced mind, good reasoning powers, and has control over the imagination and sensitiveness, is quite free from scruples. They are found in those that are affected in one or more of these faculties. And for such the scruple is a real malady, and not by any means imaginary, though it is at the same time true that the sensitive imagination plays a great part in falsifying the judgments of the intellect.

There are many degrees and many various effects in this affliction, and there may be various physical causes to account for it.

Whilst scruples seem to arise chiefly from a disturbance of the nervous system, they may also spring from organic derangement, from functional troubles, or from a constitutional defect. There may also be causes which escape even scientific observation.[3]

[1] Quoted by P. le Lehen. *Op. cit.*, 4e partie, chap. vii.

[2] *Cf. Direction pour rassurer dans leurs Doutes les Âmes timorées*, chap. xv. Paris, Téqui.

[3] Dr. Pruner thinks that a state of scrupulousness may develop from the qualms of conscience that are consequent upon a criminal life, or from temptations to diffidence or despair. (*Théologie Morale*, t. i., chap. iii. Paris, V. Palmé.)

Our first step must be to discover the cause of this malady, which is termed "scrupulousness," and which sometimes appears as a monomania, sometimes as a well-marked form of mental alienation.

The medical man must decide upon the means of removing or modifying the principle of the morbid state, and the physician of the soul should also take this into account to assist him in the spiritual part of the cure.

The rules of conduct prescribed by theologians for confessors in the direction of the scrupulous aim always at this object, and must be applied without conflicting with medical prescription, the purpose of which is to remedy the physical cause of the mental defects.

Scruples arise from a physical malady, and vary according to the nature and intensity of that malady. Not to admit this would be to take an effect for a cause. It would be going counter to facts that belong to the sphere of experience, since it is matter of observation that scruples rise and fall in intensity according to the disease. And though this disease may escape recognition or analysis, it does not follow that it is purely imaginary.[1] It is no more so than the various disorders of the nervous system, and, in fact, proceeds from a similar source—namely, from a morbid physical influence. This influence must be recognized, as we recognize the mutual action between soul and body and the relationship

[1] The imagination is closely dependent upon the organism. So that, strictly speaking, it does not mean that an ailment is quite independent of the organism when it is said to arise from the imagination.

that exists between the workings of the brain and the operations of the soul.[1]

The scrupulous seem to have their thoughts always in a tangle. They have so much to say, so many and such important points to expose, that they cannot control themselves sufficiently to take them one by one. They must explain absolutely everything as though their cure depended upon all this detail. They have examined every point of their subject, made many notes, and, as far as their troubled state allows them, they have collected all this matter together.

A person was recommended to me who, outside his work, could think of nothing but his troubles of conscience. He spent a good deal of the night putting his difficulties into writing, as, having to work for his living, he could not find time enough in the day. After having heard his troubles, I asked him to leave with me what he had written, and I was presented with *five* copy-books. I told him I should do my best to restore his peace of mind, provided that outside of our interviews he should give no attention to his troubles whatever. He promised, and went away. Three weeks later he returned in a sad and discouraged state. He brought with him *seven* fresh manuscripts, and confessed that the labour of writing these had brought on a state of physical and moral exhaustion, and also an increase

[1] *Cf.* St. Thomas, *De Veritate*, q. 26, a. 10; A. Eymieu, *Le Gouvernement de Soi-même:* Paris, Perrin; E. de Feuchtersleben, *Hygiène de l'Âme:* Paris, Baillière; Th. Ribot, *Essai sur les Passions:* Paris, Alcan; Richard J. Ebbard, *How to Acquire and Strengthen Will Power:* London, Fowler; Francis Thompson, *Health and Holiness:* London, Burns and Oates.

of troubles. Within a few weeks he had worked at fever heat to write these twelve books descriptive of his scruples, and the result was that he got gradually worse. He one day admitted that within the past three or four years he must have filled about a hundred such copy-books. A few weeks after seeing me, he wrote to say he was improving. "I force myself," he wrote, "to do all that you recommend. I find I can obey more easily than I used to, and if only I can continue to obey I have hopes of ridding myself of my dreadful scruples." He did not here take into account that both scruples and obedience would follow the course of his malady. He did not see the connection between them.

The scrupulous are constantly thinking of their state without ever being able to satisfy themselves as to their mode of expressing what they feel. They become more and more confused. They find themselves in a torrent of impressions and ideas that rush and tumble together in the utmost disorder.

According to the intensity of their malady grows the need to discuss their scruples and doubts. Some will seem to enjoy a relative calm or even decided pleasure in relating their experiences, whether by word of mouth or in writing; and so it is a great joy to them to find a willing listener who can understand them, and give advice and consolation.

But in the majority of cases it is not easy to convey what is experienced to others, however friendly they may be. To open the mind to another is the one burning desire of the troubled victim, because this

is the one means of obtaining solace. But, on the other hand, it is impossible to do it on account of their state of depression, physical, intellectual, and moral, and also on account of the greater or less confusion that exists in the sufferer's mind.

It will happen sometimes that one has hardly begun the story of his woes when some observation or question from his listener will make him give up and change the subject altogether. He will abandon his subject, and throw himself into a fresh one with as much eagerness as he had commenced. In some instances this changeableness occurs without provocation, some personal impression or some new idea suddenly alters the train of thought.

To satisfy their craving for talking about themselves it would be necessary to allow them to continue their interviews not merely for hours and days, but for months and even years. Naturally, the subject-matter is always the same, the theme is the same, ideas are the same. The only variation is to be found in the choice of expression and the construction of phrases. When all is told, it simply amounts to the one fact that they really suffer in mind as well as in body.

Fénelon well understood the dangers of the evil when he said that scrupulousness is in no sense connected with the degrees of perfection in the Christian life. It is rather, he says, a fault and a weakness for which one must humble oneself before God, rather than glory in it. For this state of conscience makes one act on feeble and uncertain conjecture, and makes one groundlessly suppose there may be sin where there is not, and makes one

hesitate when there is no cause to fear. All these faults are opposed to sound reason. They are faults that are justly reckoned among the greatest dangers to which a soul can be exposed.

The learned Gerson knew well how deplorable it is to be subject to scruples. He said that a scrupulous conscience often causes more evil than a lax one, inasmuch as it leads one along a road that cannot reach our true goal of salvation, but simply causes weariness, and usually discouragement, if not despair.

II. Consequences.

The scrupulous form a completely false idea of God; they interpret their own thoughts, words, and actions wrongly, and have mistaken notions on everything around them. The reason is ultimately to be found in some organic defect whose influence extends especially to the religious sense, and distorts sentiments and belief that rest upon inadequate foundations.

Instead of recognizing in God a Father and a Redeemer Who has died for the salvation of all without exception, and who chooses to be called the "Father of Mercies,"[1] they see in Him only an inexorable judge ever ready to pronounce the sentence of death, a pitiless God Who finds pleasure in torturing His creatures now, and precipitating them into hell at the end, as the final destiny for which they were made. They seem not to realize that the words of goodness, love, pardon, and mercy, of which the Gospel is full, can have any

[1] 2 Cor. i. 3.

application to them. For them the most impressive words of Holy Scripture are: "Depart from Me, ye cursed!"[1] The term "mercy," which expresses the chief relation of God with sinful man, recurs so frequently in the Sacred Pages that it alone should suffice to infuse the greatest hope into the greatest of sinners. As St. Bernard rightly says, the Father of Mercies must necessarily be a Father to them that need mercy. Hence the sinner ought always to be impressed with these words of Esdras: God is "a forgiving God, gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and full of compassion"[2]

These other passages may also be recalled to mind: "The mountains shall be moved and the hills shall tremble, but My mercy shall not depart from thee . . . said the Lord that hath mercy on thee."[3] "O Lord, Thy mercy is in heaven, and Thy truth reacheth even to the clouds."[4] "As far as the East is from the West, so far hath He removed our iniquities from us."[5] "The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord."[6] "God hath not forsaken them that hope in Him. . . . He hath fulfilled His mercy which He promised to the house of Israel."[7] "The Lord is gracious and merciful: patient and plenteous in mercy . . . and His tender mercies are over all His works."[8]

"You have no reason to doubt," says St. Francis de Sales, "that God looks upon you with love. However little desire sinners may have to be converted, God still looks lovingly upon the worst of

[1] Matt. xxv. 41. [2] 2 Esdras ix. 17. [3] Isa. liv. 10.
[4] Ps. xxxv. 6. [5] Ps. cii. 12. [6] Ps. xxxii. 5.
[7] Judith xiii. 17, 18. [8] Ps. cxliv. 8, 9.

them."[1] "In His greatest anger God cannot withhold the effects of His mercy."[2] "I am accustomed to say that our misery is the throne of God's mercy."[3]

"Divine goodness and justice," says Bossuet, "may be called the two arms of God; but goodness is the right arm, the one that begins every work."[4]

"O my God!" St. Augustine exclaimed, "you have placed mercy at the door of your palace, to welcome all who present themselves and to chide them that hesitate to approach."[5] St. Theresa's cry was: "O God of my heart, how ready we are to offend you, and how ready you are to pardon!"[6]

The Venerable Father Jean, Abbot of Fontfroide (1815-1895), said once to a spiritual director: "We must welcome sinners with open arms, and remember that very often they are too weak to endure long penances. Their debts must be paid, and the priest must do himself what his penitent cannot or will not do in this matter." Some moralists thought him too easy-going with sinners. On one occasion he was asked how he would settle matters with God when he had to render an account of the souls which he directed. His answer was: "The good God has not learnt theology out of your manuals. You make Him a theologian, but He calls Himself Infinite Mercy." In the same strain he once addressed the professor of a seminary: "You are a good theologian, but the good Master has no need of your theology. He knows all the principles so well that He has no

[1] Letter 360. [2] *Spirit of St. Francis de Sales*, viii. 13.
[3] St. Fr. de Sales, *Entretien* ii. [4] *Pensées Chrétiennes*.
[5] Quoted by M. Hamon, *Méditations*, vol. ii.
[6] *Élévation*, x.

difficulty in making His mercy and justice accord. And that is just where all your trouble lies."

When this saintly man had removed the stains from the conscience of his penitents, he would say: "Now you have His nuptial garment, and you must partake of the feast." The feast was in his meaning a truly Christian life.[1]

As we said above, the scrupulous find themselves ever face to face with sin, and especially with mortal sin. They fail to make any distinction between temptation and consent, between imperfection and sin, between venial and mortal sin, or between precepts and counsels. In order to give their attention to mere minutiæ or to carry out some childish detail, they will not hesitate to commit some grievous offence or neglect the fundamental duties of religion or of their state of life. Some will insist on working when they ought to rest, on praying when they ought to attend to other duties, on fasting when they have most need of food. In the same person one may sometimes find scruples on certain matters and a total lack of consideration for other points of importance. For them there is no difference between what is essential and what is only accessory. Conscience is wholly deranged. Only too easily these poor deluded creatures are led into all kinds of excesses by meeting simple souls who encourage them to persevere in their mistaken lives.

These are not mere theoretical considerations. A lady of our acquaintance thought herself endowed

[1] E. Capelle, *Le Père Jean*, chaps. xvi. and xix. Paris, V. Retaux.

with high spiritual gifts, because, after having heard several Masses, she would spend her day in visiting the sick, reading pious books, and praying, whilst she was supposed to be undergoing strict medical treatment. Another had given up the Sacraments, and scarcely ever went to church because she was unworthy to enter within the holy place, and because she might make wrong use of the practices of piety, and perhaps even be guilty of sacrilege.

To place too much reliance on human means of cure is not advisable.[1] But the opposite excess is also wrong. We are told that our carefulness is not to begin only when sickness is upon us.[2] In other words, we must use all reasonable care to prevent illness by regulating life according to the laws of God and the ordinary rules of healthy living. These laws, which form the groundwork of preventive medicine, may be summed up in a few words: the fear of the Lord,[3] "soundness of heart" (as opposed to envy),[4] temperance,[5] and regular occupation.

We are therefore bound in conscience to adopt all ordinary means to preserve or regain health. "The Most High hath created medicines out of the earth, and a wise man will not abhor them."[6] But at the same time both patient and physician should bear in mind that it is God Who gives virtue to the remedy,[7] and health to the body, and that without Him all medical science counts for nothing.[8] Both,

[1] 2 Par. xvi. 12.
[2] Ecclus. xviii. 20.
[3] Prov. x. 27.
[4] Prov. xiv. 30.
[5] Ecclus. xxxvii. 32-34.
[6] Ecclus. xxxviii. 4.
[7] 4 Kings v. 5-7.
[8] Gen. xx. 17; Wisd. xvi. 8-13; Ezech. xxx. 21.

therefore, must needs have recourse to God, the Supreme Physician. He is Master of life and death; He holds the highest power over sickness and healing.[1] Every intelligent and unbiassed observer must admit the beneficial influence of religion on all sufferers, but particularly on nervous patients. "What the patient has need of," says Dr. Burlureaux, "is moral support—faith, namely, and in a special manner hope. And where shall this be found outside the teaching of that One Who has said: 'Come to Me all ye that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you'?"[2] Even unbelievers, who have sincerity and character enough to hold themselves aloof from bigotry, recognize and approve of this influence. Thus Dr. Dubois, whose religious and philosophic theories stand quite apart from Catholic dogma, expresses himself thus: "Religious belief might become the best preservative against all ills of the mind and the strongest means of their cure, if it were lively enough to produce a state of Christian stoicism. In such a state, unfortunately only too rare, a man of intelligence would become invulnerable; feeling himself sustained by his God, he would fear neither sickness nor death. He might succumb to some physical illness, but morally he is ever able to bear up in the midst of any sufferings. He is quite beyond the reach of the pusillanimous emotions that we find in neurotic patients."[3]

Cases may often be met with of persons who, to

[1] Deut. xxxii. 39.

[2] *La Lutte pour la Santé*, 2e partie, chap. iv. Paris, Perrin, 1907.

[3] *Op. cit.*, leçon xvii.

obtain a respite from their mental worries (and we must say they are often very considerable), seem to undertake to register all the scandals of the parish. In this respect they will be quite devoid of scruples and will pull to pieces the character of their friends and acquaintances. These scrupulous persons will accuse themselves of some sin that they think they commit, and at the very same time by detraction, or even calumny, will rob their neighbours of their most precious possession—namely, their good name. They see most things in a wrong light, and stop at no act of destruction. "The stroke of a whip," says Holy Writ, "maketh a blue mark, but the stroke of the tongue will break bones. Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not so many as have perished by their own tongue. . . . The death thereof is a most evil death—a hell is preferable to it."[1]

These unfortunate detractors are nothing less than thieves—and thieves of the worst kind—both because they rob their neighbours of their most valued possession, and also because they can seldom or never repair the injury; whereas the common thief can at least make restitution. It is perhaps better when the evil has been effected by calumny. They can at all events confess publicly then that they have lied.

Hence, as we may rank the calumniator and detractor with the thief, it is not to be wondered at that God should punish this fault with dreadful severity. Hence, again, it is incumbent upon every Christian to beware of these "vipers' tongues,"[2] if

[1] Ecclus. xxviii. 21-25. [2] Job xx. 16.

one would not be bitten and poisoned by them. "Hedge in thy ears with thorns, hear not a wicked tongue, and make doors and bars to thy mouth."[1]

Another class of those afflicted with scruples claim that they must have distractions to take their minds off their trouble. Under this pretext they fritter away their time in frivolous gossip rather than employ themselves in serious reading or in manual work.

Like Pico della Mirandola, these people are ready to talk about "everything knowable and something besides." The piety of such is usually on a par with their knowledge. Hence they would do well to remember that "idleness hath taught much evil,"[2] that in many words shall be found folly,[3] "there shall not want sin,"[4] and that at the Last Judgment an account must be given of every idle word.[5] "When," wrote Père Lacordaire, "one is able to read the writings of David, St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Theresa, Bossuet, Pascal, and others like them, one must be guilty indeed in wasting time in the silly trifles of society."[6]

Communities of women are particularly subject to the evils arising from sins of the tongue, if authorities have not the qualities needed to maintain order. Those parts of the house where there should always be silence may soon be transformed into general meeting-places in which everyone considers herself at liberty to move about, to chatter, and make as much noise as she pleases. The inconvenience of

[1] Ecclus. xxviii. 28.
[2] Ecclus. xxxiii. 29.
[3] Eccles. v. 2.
[4] Prov. x. 19.
[5] Matt. xii. 36.
[6] *Lettres à la Comtesse de Prailly*.

all this can scarcely be imagined except by those that have had to endure it.

Superiors should therefore regard it as a strict duty to check these selfish or thoughtless individuals at least out of consideration for sick persons, and especially of any suffering from nerves. It is obvious that no reference is here made to recreations or friendly conversations. These can have none but a good effect upon the sick—at all events, on those who have a tendency to low spirits.

A truly extraordinary characteristic of scrupulous persons is the way in which they form their conscience.

They certainly do worry themselves about their distractions at Mass or in their excesses of devotion; but the sins of the tongue cause them no thought at all. If one should attempt to convince them of the shallowness and unreasonableness of their devotion, he would speedily discover that he was preaching in the wilderness. It is sad, but such is the fact. Still, it is not to be wondered at when one recalls these words of Holy Scripture: "The heart of the wise seeketh instruction: and the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness."[1] As Mgr. Cannes says: "A person may be very devout, and at the same time full of faults."[2] By such persons everything must be examined, discussed, and sifted without any regard for that saying of Our Lord: "Judge not, and you shall not be judged."[3] St. Francis de Sales observes that just as the tongue is an indication to the physician of health or sickness, so our

[1] Prov. xv. 14.
[2] *L'Esprit de S. François de Sales.*
[3] Matt. vii. 1.

words manifest the quality of our souls: "By thy works thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."[1]

From all this we may judge of the dangerous mistakes that are made by wishing to find diversion from scrupulous anxiety in gossip.

"Some persons," writes St. John of the Cross, "casting their eyes upon their defects, are stirred to indignation against themselves rather through pride than humility. Their vexation arises from the fact that they would like to acquire sanctity all at once. Many propose to themselves fine plans, and draw up numerous projects. But, having no humility and much self-esteem, the more plans they make, the more faults they commit, and the more they are disappointed with themselves. They have not the patience to wait till God grants them what they desire. Then there is the other extreme of those that are so tranquil, and move with feet so slow in the way of perfection, that God would perhaps be better pleased if they were less patient."[2]

On the same matter we have this doctrine of St. Francis de Sales: "You complain," he says, "that many imperfections and faults are mixed up with your life, contrary to the desire you have for perfection, and for the pure love of our God. I answer that it is impossible for us to get away from self altogether as long as we live here below. We must carry ourselves as we are till God takes us into heaven. And as long as we carry self, we carry a burden that is worthless. So we must have

[1] Matt. xii. 37.
[2] *The Dark Night of the Soul*, bk. i., chap. v.

patience, and not think that we can be healed in a day of so many bad habits that we have contracted through the little care we gave in the past to our spiritual welfare."

God has healed some few on a sudden, without leaving any sign of their former ills. So He did with the Magdalen—a change as from a sink of corruption to a limpid source of waters of perfection. And after her conversion she was not troubled again. But it is also true that in some of His disciples God left many traces of their evil inclinations for a long time after their conversion, for their greater profit. St. Peter is an example, who after his vocation stumbled several times by his imperfections, and then fell altogether and deplorably in the denial.

Solomon points out that there is much insolence in the "bondwoman that becomes heir to her mistress."[1] So would the soul, after serving its passions for a long period, run the risk of becoming proud and vain if it obtained the perfect mastery all at once. Little by little and step by step must we acquire that power for the conquest of which holy men and women have laboured for decades of years. We must be patient with everybody, but first of all with ourselves."[2]

"To train a young horse," the same Saint says in another place, "and to accustom him to saddle and bridle, it takes whole years."

In another letter he gives the following advice: "You are too severe with the person in question: it is not right to be always making reproaches when the person has good intentions. Tell him, rather

[1] Prov. xxx. 23. [2] Letter 669.

that, however frequently he falls, he must not be surprised nor feel angry with himself. Let him, instead, look up to Our Lord, Who from heaven, like a Father, looks down upon a child still too weak to be able to walk properly. He says: "Go gently, my child." If he falls, He encourages him by saying, "He has stumbled, but he is a good child," and then approaches and holds out His hand to help His child to rise. If he is a child in humility, and recognizes the fact, then he will not be surprised at falling, for he will not fall far."[1]

III. Matters that Give Rise to Scruples.

If we have treated at length these faults against charity, it has been in order to expose their seriousness and hatefulness to those that offend so easily. The persons with whom we are dealing are the more liable to form habits contrary to charity, because they are incapable of occupying their mind or applying themselves to any serious work; and, moreover, they feel it to be a need to talk incessantly. A bad habit—and it is especially true of this one—is the more easily contracted as people find themselves encouraged, or even urged on, by others. In this case people of a like frame of mind, equally unoccupied and equally blind as to religious duties, can easily be found to listen to their constant talk. Such warnings of Holy Writ as the following are ignored or forgotten, or passed over as unimportant: "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man."[2] "He that keepeth his mouth

[1] Letter 453. [2] St. James iii. 2.

keepeth his soul; but he that hath no guard on his speech shall meet with evils."[1]

An essential matter for the scrupulous is to have some regular occupation. Besides the fact that this will be beneficial to their health, there is this other: that without occupation their minds must ever turn upon their affliction or their scruples. The difficulty is to find an occupation that is both congenial and proportioned to their strength. The task that they do not take up willingly only excites them, weakens them, and leads to disastrous results. Then, as they are not able to persevere long at one kind of occupation, there must be a variety of employment for them. They must be looked after and kept in check almost like children.

There are other and worse troubles that these people are subject to. A certain number are besieged with ideas that are wicked, shameful, and humiliating. They are travesties of religion, its ministers, of the Saints, and every kind of pious practice. Or, again, some are tortured with complaints, interior rebellion, contempt, insult, hatred, curses and blasphemies against God, the Blessed Sacrament, Holy Communion, Our Lady, and the Saints. Some of these imaginings are so horrible that they could not be described. Suffice it to say here, the very worst abominations, impieties, sacrileges, haunt these afflicted persons everywhere, but especially during prayer-time, in their devotional exercises, and in the reception of the Sacraments.[2]

[1] Prov. xiii. 3.

[2] Persons that do not understand the efficacy of grace use all their influence to withdraw these poor victims from

These fearful temptations seem to overwhelm their whole being. Reason, will, and the whole soul seem to be entirely under their influence. In some cases the sufferers cannot control themselves from giving blasphemous expression to what they feel. And then they consider themselves responsible for these impulsive outbursts, whether they have given deliberate consent or not.

"The temptation to blasphemy," says Gerson, "like all other evil thoughts, is more readily overcome by despising it, by not reflecting upon it, and

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every kind of religious exercise, without considering that they are probably depriving them of their only means of finding peace, and perhaps cure, of the malady from which their troubles arise. This happens oftener than one would think. The advice of an ill-advised doctor may be responsible for this. Father Dubois, S.J., refers to this danger: "The relatives are frightened at the scruples and the physical state of one whom they love, and fail to adopt the only course which common sense dictates—namely, to hear the advice of the physician of the soul as well as of the doctor, and try to adapt the treatment to the advice of both. Often without consulting the former, who has the very source of the malady under his command, they imprudently give their implicit attention to the other, who, after all, can only deal with the results of the evil.... What blindness! Will you, parents, dare to sacrifice all consideration of the soul of one dear to you for the interest of the body, perhaps on the rash word of a doctor who has no thought of religion, and is exceeding his duty in his idea that the matter belongs entirely to his sphere? When you hinder, as dangerous, the care of a prudent confessor, will you rashly decide that henceforth your child must forego the Sacraments even at the time of the Paschal precept or at death? And how will this neglect of the soul end? Why, in the loss of that bodily health which gives so much thought now.... That state of scrupulousness, the real source of the ruin of the body, will not give way to mere external applications—it is the spiritual treatment that must eradicate it" (*L'Ange Conducteur des âmes scrupuleuses ou craintives*, chap. vi. Paris, Desclée).

turning the mind to other things, than by combating it, using effort to resist, and arguing with the suggestion."

Without doubt this is very true. But we must add that some persons can do absolutely nothing against the temptations to blasphemy and other troubles and anguish of soul. This is the answer the writer received on one occasion from a person of intelligence and instruction in response to the question why she allowed herself to be so agitated and to talk so frequently about her troubles of this nature: "What can I do?" she exclaimed. "All this comes upon me like a fever. I am powerless!" At the thought of it she could not restrain her sobs and tears. It seemed, she declared, as though she must go out of her mind. Her friends never suspected the trouble she was in, as she had never spoken of these matters, knowing by experience that she would only be misunderstood.

Not a few of these afflicted persons suppose their temptations to be a proof of abandonment by God—an indication, or even the beginning, of reprobation. Some have been known to ask every priest or religious they met if they are not to be lost.

We mention these sad cases in order to try and reassure the sufferers. They must first know that these evils, caused by their morbid state, are not by any means their personal experience only. They easily fancy that they are the only ones affected, because they never hear anyone speak of these things. It is natural that those that are tempted in these ways are not generally disposed to make it a subject of conversation even with their most

intimate friends. If they were as reserved on other matters as well, they would spare themselves a great deal of trouble, and might soon become perfect. In any case, it is because they maintain such a strict silence on these matters that they imagine their state to be something quite exceptional. This same silence may in some cases be the cause of the beginning and growth of scruples, torture of conscience, and, in the end, despair.

One example chosen out of many will suffice to convey some idea of the ingenuity of these persons in making troubles for themselves.

A person whom I had already known for a considerable time came to me quite upset. "For several weeks," she said, "I have been wondering whether you are really capable of directing me, since you are ill yourself." She had this book, which, I pointed out, had been examined and approved by several religious, professors of theology, and medical men, and I asked her to tell me in what my advice to her differed from the doctrine of these pages. She had no answer to give, and she seemed to be quite satisfied. At all events, she never referred to this trouble of hers again, even in later correspondence.

There is yet a worse form of trial than the foregoing—namely, doubts against faith. In most difficulties that the afflicted undergo there remains the assurance that God knows of the trial, that He can lighten the burden or remove it, or, in any case, that He will reward patient resignation under it. But in this case the question of recompense is removed; there is no consolation whatever to offer,

because the sufferer feels that the "Author of all consolation" does not exist. What comfort can there be for such a soul? Can one suggest the pleasures of the world—"where all is lying and deception"[1]—of the world that Christ has cursed,[2] and the friendship of which renders us displeasing to God?[3]

[1] St. Teresa, *Interior Castle*, chap. x.

[2] Matt. xviii. 7; John xviii. 9; I John v. 19. "Reflect, I beg of you," says Bossuet, "how the world wins you over. This dangerous master does not act like others: he teaches without dogmatizing. His particular method is to avoid proof and to insinuate his doctrines gradually into the heart. Every person of the world we speak to is an organ to express his principles. Consequently, it is not enough to oppose this teaching by argument and contrary maxims. For the principles of the world creep upon us by a sort of contagion rather than by explicit and formal instruction. Indeed, all that is said in worldly society—the atmosphere even—suggests pleasure and vanity. If you listen to Tertullian's answer as to what is to be feared for the Christian in the world, you will find he says: 'Everything around you, even the atmosphere which is infected by so much evil talk and so many anti-Christian maxims' (*De Spectac.*, 27). The great misfortune of human life is that a man is not content to live devoid of right sense himself, but wishes to make others participate in his folly. And so much that might be quite indifferent to us, often, through our weakness, arouses our curiosity by the opinions that are expressed around us. So the spirit becomes entirely corrupt through this strange itching to communicate to one another our errors and folly" (*Sermon for Third Sunday of Advent*).

Hence with reason did the pagan sage observe: "Every time that I have been in the company of men, I have returned less a man than I was" (*Seneca*, Epist. vii.).

"How strange is the world," says St. Francis de Sales, "in its fanciful demands, and at what a price is it obeyed! If the Creator gave such difficult orders as the world does, how few faithful servants would He find!" (Letter 188).

[3] Monseigneur Camus, *L'Esprit de St. François de Sales*, iv. p^{e}.

But, apart from the fact that the strength of the sick person does not allow him to indulge in such pleasures, he already knows, perhaps to his cost, that it leaves nothing in the soul but weariness, regrets, torment, and despair. The experience of centuries—renewed again and again—is enough to prove it.

Can he then find consolation amongst friends? Unfortunately, let them never be so eloquent, devoted, and true, the comfort that is sought is not at their command.

Can we suggest the study of philosophy, science, history, literature? Here, again, there is no proportion between all these things—beautiful, elevating, and captivating though they be—and the needs and aspirations of a soul created for the supernatural, for heaven, for God alone. The simple explanation is—none of these things confer grace, and grace is the only remedy capable of lessening or removing such trials.

What remains, then, for the sufferer afflicted with doubt? There is no support—absolutely none—but his own heavy cross. There is no choice between the cross and absolute void.

Nevertheless, the patient must reassure himself. He must be persuaded that his pain is a trial, a probation, as are all those that we have spoken of. It will cease when God shall judge fit in the interest of the sufferer. This is a case where one must "hope against hope," and recognize that the remedy must be proportioned to the evil—namely, frequentation of the Sacraments, complete abandonment of self into the hands of God, with a renewal

of resignation at each return of the temptation, and absolute obedience to the confessor.

" You ask me," says St. Francis de Sales, " what is the remedy for the pain that is occasioned you by the temptations that the evil one suggests against the faith and against the Church. You must do as you would with temptations to sins of the flesh, and not discuss the matter at all. . . . There must be no answer, but you must pretend not to hear what the enemy says. Let him cry at the door as loud as ever he likes, you must not say even, 'Who is there ?'

" You may tell me, that is all very well—but the tempter is importunate, and his clamouring from outside drowns the voice within. I say, it is all the same: have patience, throw yourself at the feet of God, and remain there. He will understand by your humble manner, even though you cannot speak, that you are His, and that you want His help. But be sure to keep yourself well locked in, and do not open the door either to see who is there or to send away the troublesome visitor. In the end he will give up and will leave you in peace. Courage, then. The time of trial will soon slip by. Provided he gain not admission, it does not matter. In the meantime, it is a good sign that the enemy does keep on knocking and disturbing. It shows that he has not obtained what he wants. If he had, he would make no more noise, but enter and stay. Take note of this, so that you may not have any scruple. . . . Know that I have met with few persons in a state of advanced holiness who have not gone through this trial, so you must

have patience. After the storms our God will send peace."[1]

Let it be understood that the great servants of God have gone through these proofs. St. Alphonsus de Liguori, the great doctor of the Church, suffered greatly from scruples, as may be seen in Père Berthe's account of his life. "A darkness worse than that of the tomb surrounded the poor solitary. He beheld himself abandoned by all—abandoned by God—and he seemed to be on the verge of hell. Looking back on his past life, he saw nothing but his sins. His labours, his good works, were no more than spoiled fruits that were hateful in God's sight. A conscience, tormented by scruples from morning till night and a prey to innumerable illusions, turned his simplest and holiest actions into so many grievous sins. He, the great moralist, who had spoken with wonderful discernment on all cases of conscience, had guided numbers of souls in the ways of holiness, had reassured sinners by speaking to them of God's infinite mercies, and had so often comforted troubled souls—he was now groping along and trembling for his safety like a blind man on the edge of a precipice, and scarcely able to move a step forward without the aid of a helping hand."

"In this state of trouble the Saint did not dare to communicate. His love for Jesus Christ drew him to the altar, and then through fear he could not open his mouth to receive the Sacred Host. One morning Father Garzilli went to give him Communion. He had already pronounced the words of the liturgy—

[1] Letter 737. In this letter St. Francis recommends the reading of Father Ribadeneira's work on "Tribulation."

Ecce Agnus Dei—and was beginning the *Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi*, when he saw the poor old man prepare to retire. 'Monsignore,' he said, 'do not keep Jesus Christ waiting.' Often, the intervention of Father Villani was necessary in order to make him overcome his fears. One day of extreme agitation he remained undecided about this Communion till midday, when suddenly the cloud that obscured his mind was removed, and he cried out with tears, 'Give me Jesus Christ!' On another occasion he would not bring himself to communicate because he believed his soul to be covered with sins. Villani came to calm him, and aroused in his heart such a desire to receive Our Lord that Communion was taken to him at once. The necessary short delay seemed to be years instead of moments. 'When wilt Thou come?' he repeated incessantly—'when wilt Thou come, O my Jesus?'"

"Being accustomed to pour out his heart into the heart of Our Lord, Alphonsus naturally had recourse to the solace of prayer in the midst of his anguish. But it seemed as though there were an impassable barrier between God and himself. 'I address myself to God,' he said one day, 'but at every word I seem to hear an interior voice answering that God rejects me. I cry out, 'My Jesus, I love Thee!' and the voice answers, 'It is not true!' Then, as the obscurity increased, he seemed to feel that God had shut His heart against him, and that for him Paradise was lost. In such moments of unspeakable distress he would gaze upon the crucifix, his eyes filled with tears, and exclaim: 'O my Jesus, shall I not then have the happiness of loving

Thee eternally?' Then, turning to Our Lady: 'My good Mother, why must I not love you in eternity?' Answering himself, he would add: 'I have trampled underfoot all my obligations; I no longer can say Mass or Office. I do no good work at all; my senses revolt; I eat ravenously; I do not understand how God can still bear with me.' A prey to the most violent anguish, he would then cry for mercy: 'No, my Jesus, do not allow me to be lost! Lord, send me not to perdition, because none in hell can love Thee. Chastise me as I deserve, but do not reject me from Thy Presence.'"

"Obedience was this great Saint's only comfort. Unable to decide aught for himself, he blindly accepted the advice of his director or of any other priest, in spite of his own feelings and the contrary suggestions made by the tempter to lead him on to despair. 'My head will not obey,' he used to say. He was also often heard to express himself in terms like these: 'Lord, make me learn how to overcome myself and submit; no, I do not wish to contradict. I do not wish to consider myself at all.' In this way obedience triumphed over all temptations."

"Scruples made his life almost insupportable, and yet he was required to bear more in the shape of the most frightful temptations against various virtues. God allowed the demon to try all his strength against the holy old man, in order to let the fallen spirit know that his intelligence and ingenuity count for nought against a will fortified by grace from on high. The evil spirit never ceased attacking him, ever hoping to break down his power of resistance and to drag him into the abyss. 'I was astounded,'

writes Father Mazzini, 'at the temptations he had to undergo, and at the same time I was delighted to behold the courage with which he surmounted them all.' The witnesses for the process of beatification, living then at Pagani, seem unable to find expressions strong enough to depict that supreme struggle. 'As gold cast into the furnace,' says Father Caprioli, 'so was this servant of God in the midst of his horrible temptations. I have seen him, on more than one occasion, weep like a child. I have heard him burst out into heartrending cries, and in a tone that filled one with pity implore help against the enemy.' 'Sometimes,' adds Father Cajone, 'the violence of the temptations and his interior desolation not merely drew tears from his eyes, but left him in a fainting condition. Yet never did he lose confidence in the power and goodness of God.'"

"Father Nigra relates that one day his trials and aridity agitated him to such an extent that his whole frame trembled. 'Lord, Lord,' he cried, 'come to my assistance!' At the height of this crisis Brother Romito tried to calm the Saint by saying: 'Monsignor, keep calm, I beg of you, or you will go out of your mind.' Without being in the least moved by the remark, the holy man turned to the brother and said gently: 'My dear brother, if God wills that I should die mad, what have you to say against it?' Here was a soul in a paroxysm of trial, and yet making a supreme act of resignation.

"Considering the nature and number of the temptations of St. Alphonsus, as Fathers Villani, Tannoia, Corrado, and Mazzini related them in the process of beatification, one cannot repress a feeling of terror

at all that the Saint went through. One cannot help recalling the lives of Anthony and Hilarion, and so many others who had to combat with the evil spirits."

"Alphonsus ever possessed a most lively faith in the mysteries of our holy religion. One would believe that he beheld, as do the angels, Jesus hidden under the sacred species. His intimate communing with God and his frequent ecstasies had made him penetrate deep into the supernatural world. We know from his writings with what unshaken conviction he defended God's Church and her infallible teaching against heretics. Yet during the period of trial, we are told by Father Mazzini, there was not a single one of those truths against which he had not to suffer temptations. Against every article of the Creed doubts surged up in his mind. And when his conscience became overcast and failed to distinguish between mere feeling and consent, it seemed to him that faith was dying out of his soul. Then his only remedy was to hang on to the truth and multiply his acts of faith, and he did so by crying out with all his energy: 'I believe, O Lord—yes, I believe—and I will live and die a child of the Church.' But the demon that worried him, unwilling to give up, appeared before him under strange forms in order to try and give a greater force to the temptation."[1]

Somewhat similar was the case of St. Jane Frances de Chantal. With tears she used to bewail that she was completely deprived of faith, hope,

[1] R. P. Berthe, *Saint Alphonse de Liguori*, t. ii., chap. xiv. Paris, Libraire de la Sainte-Famille.

and charity. "It is a martyrdom for me," she would say, "to see everyone around me tasting the joy of faith, and to find myself deprived of it."

St. Francis de Sales wrote thus to her on the subject: "Your temptations against faith have come back to you, and although you do not answer them, they still harass you. You give no answer, and so far you do well, my child. But you think too much about them; you have too much fear and apprehension concerning them. They would do you no harm without all that. You are too sensitive about your temptations. You love the faith, and you would not have a single thought contrary to it come to you. As soon as ever a single one presents itself, you are sad and disturbed. You are too jealous of the purity of your faith. It seems to you that anything at all may spoil it. No, no, my child; let the wind blow around you, and do not mistake the rustling of the leaves for clanging of arms."

"Lately I happened to go near some beehives, and some of the bees settled on my face. I was about to remove them with my hand when a peasant stopped me. 'No,' he said, 'do not be afraid, and do not touch them; they will not hurt you at all, but if you touch them they will sting.' I believed him, and not one of them did me any harm. Do you believe me—have no fear of these temptations, do not touch them, and they will not hurt you; only pass on and take no notice of them."[1]

St. Francis de Sales himself was pursued by so dangerous a temptation against the Blessed Sacrament that he would never make it known. He

[1] Letter 75.

would only say that without the assistance of a special grace he must have been overcome.

The best of all remedies in such trials is to follow the advice of this same great Saint: "To escape by the door of the will, leaving that of the reason." Then to *pray*, to make acts of faith and humility,[1] and to recite the *Credo* whatever repugnance, distaste, or aversion one may feel to these practices. Above all, those subject to these trials must not forget that in this very dangerous struggle their adversary is the enemy of God and of their souls; it is he "who is glad when he has done evil, and rejoices in most wicked things";[2] it is he who has been the origin and instigator of all troubles in religion, and who is already responsible for the ruin of numbers untold. The evil that Satan has already wrought with so many feeble and ignorant souls, with so many sinners, heretics, and schismatics he wants to bring upon these. He will succeed if there be any wilful lack of prudence, humility, and trust. It is of first importance that they should mistrust their own lights: "Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not upon thy own prudence. In all thy ways think on Him, and He will direct thy steps."[3]

"The demon," writes Boudon, "does not trouble himself to tempt those that already belong to him; his strong desire is to gain those that belong to God. He is like the mastiff that barks at strangers only, not at those of the house. . . . When a city is

[1] It was the humility of St. Alphonsus that more than aught else exasperated the demon in his assaults, and so he tormented him constantly with suggestions of pride.

[2] Prov. ii. 14.

[3] Prov. iii. 5, 6.

attacked and battered by the enemy, it is plain that it is not the enemy's property, and the more strongly fortified it is, the more soldiers and guns are brought against it. Once taken, it would no longer suffer assault or attack. Courage, then, O soul, in the midst of temptation; all the disturbance that the enemy makes outside only proves that he has no place within."[1]

Some poor scrupulous souls, when freed from these troubles, find themselves dreaming of a sublime kind of life—of sacrifice, ecstasy, martyrdom, and the like. They forget that the unitive way is only to be reached through the purgative—that is, the way of struggle—since " the life of man upon earth is a warfare."[2] Before one becomes a saint, one must be just and charitable; one must lead the ordinary Christian life by accepting the daily task, and faithfully fulfilling the duties of one's state with the cross that God may see fit to send. There must first be a deep persuasion of the truth that " he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is greater."[3]

Those that are afflicted only see but one side of religious truths, and, unfortunately, it is often the aspect that pleases or flatters self-love. They follow up their narrow and paradoxical ideas with wonderful tenacity. They are so engrossed by them that they have neither ears nor eyes for any other consideration. Nothing else is of any importance. Their conduct reminds one of the story of the Roman Emperor who was assisting at a meeting of the Senate on whose decision depended the peace

[1] *Op. cit.* [2] Job vii. 1. [3] Luke xvi. 10.

or war of the whole Empire; and in the midst of the proceedings he ordered some little fish for his dinner.

In this state the soul allows itself to be agitated to no purpose whatever; its activity is wasted; it tries to find a reality where nothing exists. The more it is worked up, troubled, and fatigued, the less it is capable of remedying its state. The idea which the individual is following up is nothing but a will-o'-the-wisp, and the labour of the faculties is all barren, and as useless as the working of a mill without grain to grind. It ought, therefore, to be a maxim with such persons that "the Lord is not in the earthquake,"[1] but "in silence and quiet the devout soul goes forward."[2]

IV. Conclusion.

Without delaying longer on the strange eccentricities to which scrupulous souls are subject, we conclude with some moral considerations that arise from experience of Christian life.

Whatever may be the nature, intensity, or duration of the troubles and agitations we have considered, they cannot effect the least harm provided that the tempted do not deal with them *willingly* and do not seek pleasure in them. All of these troubles, on the other hand, may be utilized like all temptations; they may be made a precious source of merit for time and eternity. The fear that these afflictions cause arises simply from the fact that their true nature is not understood, and because too much notice is taken of them. Souls that look more to

[1] 3 Kings xix. 11. [2] *Imitation*, bk. i., chap. xx.

the supernatural are able to act differently; they never cease to thank God rather than bewail all these trials. Blessed Henry Suso says: "Temptations to despair, blasphemy, and the like, in some way rank those who fight against them amongst the martyrs. For the servants of God would prefer to give their life-blood for Jesus Christ by one mortal blow than suffer internally such painful temptations for months and years. So that we may infer that persons called upon to suffer from such scruples are most favoured by Divine love and are sure of reaching heaven. For, bearing their pains with patience and humility, and dying constantly in this way, they live in a continual purgatory, and leave this earth only to fly straight to heaven, purified and freed from all faults.[1] This certainly happened to a holy soul who was incessantly tried with the temptations mentioned above. God glorified that soul at the moment of death, and conducted it to heaven without its having to pass through the flames of purgatory. I can testify to its salvation to the praise and honour of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is blessed to all ages."[2]

[1] It would seem that the final torment of the martyrs is less fearful than the torture of some of the afflicted. The one lasts usually but a short time; the other continues for years—perhaps a whole lifetime. Hence St. Colette, who used, on the feasts of different martyrs, to experience the pains they had gone through, said playfully to her confessor: "God has given the martyrs now in Paradise a very great grace, and given it cheaply. They were very quickly devoured or burned or beheaded." (*Cf.* L'Abbé Douillet, *Sainte Colette*, chap. xvi. Paris, Téqui.)

[2] There is no contradiction between these words and the thought expressed by Fénelon that Blessed Henry Suso does not call scruples virtues, but the occasion of perfection to them that resist them. Whoever is victorious over them is the better for having suffered them.

Another conclusion is clear. It is of importance to break through the sadness and depression that settles upon the soul subject to scruples, and to try and instil a holy gladness instead.

We must say, like St. Philip Neri: "I will have neither scruples nor sadness in my house."[1]

[1] "Sadness," St. Thomas says, "does more harm to the body than the other passions of the soul, because it interferes with the vital action of the heart.... Besides, it is felt more than the other passions, because it weighs down the soul by an actual present evil, the impression of which is stronger than that of one in the future.... Sadness at times occasions the loss of the reason, as may be seen in cases where sorrow leads to melancholy or madness" (1. 2., *Q*. 37, *A*. 4).

S. Francis de Sales says that sadness brings on restlessness, and "restlessness increases sadness, in its turn, until it becomes most dangerous." He adds that "after sin, restlessness is the greatest evil of the soul" (*Introduction to the Devout Life*, part iv., chap. xi.). "Never let yourself lapse into a state of depression," he writes to a religious. "What should you be sad for when you are a servant of Him Who will be our Joy for ever? Nothing but sin must displease and pain us: and even this displeasure at sin must be mingled with a holy joy and consolation" (Letter 631). Cassian ranks sadness as one of "the eight principal vices that make war upon humanity" (*Conferences*, t. i., 5th. Conference with Abbot Serapion, Solesmes, 1898).

"Sadness," Père Lacordaire says, "is a kind of hunger, and it does harm in proportion as it concentrates upon itself without other nourishment" (*Third Letter to Madame de la Tour du Pin*). "Strive," he says again, "to be kind, amiable, and simple towards everyone, and do not think that Christianity consists in a morose and melancholy life. St. Paul constantly repeats to the faithful: "Rejoice ye" (*Le Père Lacordaire*, by M. Foisset, t. ii.).

Montaigne said: "I am amongst the least affected by this passion, and I neither like it nor respect it, although the world has a way of honouring it with special favour. Wisdom, virtue, and conscience are by the world clothed with sadness—a degrading and ugly dress!" (*Essais*, lib. i., chap. ii.).

The following texts may be worth recalling here:

As melancholy naturally leads to scruples, all sadness must be overcome in order to get the better of these. Sadness comes from a melancholic temperament, and throws the soul into a state of languor, worry, and pusillanimity, and the devil then takes advantage of this state of mind to make his attacks and lead the soul away from virtue. Hence the scrupulous soul must first resist the temptation to fall back upon itself, to think inordinately and anxiously of its own interests. It must not ponder over its failures nor over the checks that it may fear. There must be no reflection on the causes of its losses, real or imaginary, nor on the means to

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"A sorrowful spirit drieth up the bones" (Prov. xvii. 22). "Of sadness cometh death, and it overwhelmeth the strength" (Ecclus. xxxviii. 19). "Give not up thy soul to sadness, and afflict not thyself in thy own counsel" (*ibid.* xxx. 22). "Have pity on thy soul . . . and drive away sadness from thee" (*ibid.* 24).

"As long as thou livest, thou art subject to change, even against thy will; so as to be found sometimes joyful, sometimes sad. . . . But he who is wise and well instructed in spirit stands above all these changeable things, not heeding what he feels in himself, nor from what quarter the wind of change blows, but that the whole bent of his soul may advance towards its due and wished-for end.

"For this will he be able to continue one and the same unshaken, ever directing through so many changing events the single eye of his intention towards me" (*Imit.*, bk. iii., chap. xxxiii.). Of our Saviour, Isaias says: "He shall not be sad nor troublesome" (Isa. xlii. 4).

"A joyful mind maketh age flourishing" (Prov. xvii. 22). "The joyfulness of the heart is the life of a man . . . and the joy of a man is length of life" (Ecclus. xxx. 23). "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing" (Rom. xv. 13). "The fruit of the Spirit . . . is charity, joy, peace, patience" (Gal. v. 22). "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice" (Philip. iv. 4). "Let us be glad and rejoice" (Apoc. xix. 7). *Cf.* St. Thomas, 2. 2[ae], *Q.* 28, *de Gaudio*.

repair them. In a word, the imagination must not make it a practice to feed upon troubles and faults —past, present, or future.

When suffering from scruples a person must go out of himself, and combat his depression by resisting, though he may feel almost overcome by its violence. Instead of yielding to the inclination to go away into solitude, there to indulge more freely in his morbid thoughts, he must take part in ordinary conversation, though it may be a burden. The company of pious and spiritual people has a charm of its own, and is also calculated to inspire weak and timorous souls with brighter dispositions.[1] This will explain why St. Teresa wished her nuns to appear always cheerful, so as to communicate to others their piety and fervour. " Try, my sisters," she said, " to be affable whenever you can without giving displeasure to God. Behave so that all with whom you converse may be pleased with your manner and company, and may never be rendered afraid of virtue. The more holy a religious is, the more gracious and simple should she be in conversation. Never must you separate yourself from your sisters, however much difficulty you feel with them, and however little their conversation may please you. We must make every effort to be affable and to please those with whom we have to deal, and especially our sisters. Think, then, my sisters, that

[1] This must be understood as applying to devout persons who are aware of the state of mind of the patients of whom we are treating—who wish to take an interest in them, and show them sympathy, condescension, and kindness. In this way they become the nursing guides who support the weak ones, and help them in their struggle against the paralyzing influence of depression.

God makes no account of the many little trifles that occupy your thoughts."

Furthermore, what must encourage one in the endeavour to throw off depression is the thought that it acquires great merit before God. Amongst the means that assist in this combat Gerson and St. Francis de Sales recommend the moderate practice of some corporal mortification—a means which is of such marvellous efficacy to the soul in all spiritual enterprises, provided it be practised with discretion and under the guidance of a prudent and enlightened director.[1]

It will perhaps be said that often the struggle here prescribed is quite beyond the physical and moral force of the sufferer. This must be admitted. But it must also be noted that with sick and afflicted persons—as, indeed, with those in good health—there are very few who put forth all the strength of which they are capable. Hence we may claim that anyone can succeed in a gradual awakening and developing of required energy to withstand sadness or low spirits, if the right means are perseveringly adopted. The means are: a sincere love of God, together with assistance from charitable friends, on the one hand; and on the other, personal good disposition and steadfast purpose in *willing* their success. "Heaven helps them that help themselves," says the proverb, and so constant application is absolutely necessary.[2]

"After all," says St. Francis de Sales, "in the

[1] An anonymous writer, quoted by Père de Lehen, S.J., *op. cit.*, 4[e] partie, chap. iv., art. viii.

[2] "We achieve an object when we apply ourselves to it with all our force," says Feuchterheben; "for strong desire

midst of all the depression that may come upon us we must call in the operation of the higher will-power to do all we can for the love of God. It is true that there are some actions which depend so much upon natural disposition and temperament that it is not in our power to perform them as we should like. A sad and morbid person, for instance, cannot possibly evince the same cheerfulness in look, in word, and in countenance as when he is in better spirits. But he can very well, in spite of his feelings, speak pleasant, kind, and courteous words, and under the dictate of reason, rather than inclination, he can act with charity, gentleness, and consideration. A person may be excused for not feeling always cheerful, because we are not masters of our own feelings. But no one is to be excused for not being kind, considerate, and docile, because that is a matter of will, and all that is necessary is to make up one's mind to act against humour and inclination."[1]

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is but the expression of nature's need. 'Knock and it shall be opened unto you.' How many an ambitious man succeeds in obtaining honour and wealth. May there not be hope of similar success in the welfare of the soul!" (*Hygiène de l'Âme*, p. 319. Paris, Baillière.

[1] *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, lib. xi., chap. xxi. *Cf. La Direction, Manuel à l'Usage des Confesseurs et des Fidèles*, by Père Dubois, S.J.: Paris, Desclée; Abbé de Tourville, *Piété Confiante* (Lettres): Paris, Lecoffre. A very practical work on the matter of scruples.

CHAPTER II

THE CONFESSION OF THE SCRUPULOU

I. What Confession Should Be.

Confession is likely to be a source of trouble to souls disturbed by scruples, as they are not easily satisfied with their examination of conscience and the declaration of their sins, both of which are necessary for pardon. To give a correct idea of this delicate subject, we will cite the doctrine of some of the Saints and of authorized writers.

"Confession," writes Collet, "was not instituted to torture, but to pacify, the conscience. Consequently a scrupulous mind should despise all feelings of disquiet and apparent remorse that are based upon the doubt of sufficiency of examination and accusation of faults. Blind obedience to the director is, in this matter, the only remedy for all the trouble. Another cause of disquiet is to suppose that a good confession requires a detailed account of the smallest circumstances, so that the confessor may have before him a picture that contains the minutest detail—where, in fact, the simple indication of the name of the sin would suffice."[1]

"Even though," says another writer, "by omitting certain sins about which there is a doubt as to

[1] Quoted by Père de Lehen, S.J., *op. cit.*

whether they are mortal or whether they have been already confessed, there should be a danger of actually not confessing some mortal sin, and thereby violating the material integrity of the confession, yet there would be no sin in this. And the reason is because the scrupulous are not bound to that integrity at such a cost. If they were, they would be in a constant state of cruel torment, and would be subject to serious pain and inconvenience. This inconvenience would probably be far more considerable than certain other causes which doctors judge sufficient to excuse from the integrity of the confession."[1]

St. Francis de Sales says: "There is no need to mention in Confession all those little thoughts that come and go before the mind like flies. Nor need you speak of the distaste or disgust that you feel in your prayers and devotions. All these are not sins, but annoyances and discomforts. . . . After Confession it is no longer the time to consider whether you have told all, but then you must keep your attention calmly fixed on Our Lord, with Whom you are reconciled, and thank Him for all His benefits. So neither must you examine whether you might have forgotten something. When in the confessional just say simply what comes to your mind, and think no more of it afterwards. . . . Do not be concerned about the fact that you are not able to keep account of all your small faults to confess them. In fact, you often fall without perceiving it. Holy Writ says that the just man falls seven times—not that he sees or feels that he does—

[1] Reginald, *De Prudentia Confessoris*, lib. ii., sect. 131.

but he also rises again without keeping account of his risings.[1] Therefore do not be anxious on this point, but humbly and frankly tell what you have observed. And what has slipped your notice leave to the sweet mercy of Him Who putteth His hand under them that fall that they may not be bruised.[2] He lifts them so swiftly and gently that they are not aware of having fallen, because the hand of God catches them in falling. Nor do they notice that they have risen again, because God's hand draws them back again so suddenly that they do not think of it."[3]

Again, the same Saint writes: "There is no reason for trouble when one does not remember all one's sins to confess them. It cannot be possible that one who often makes an examination of conscience does not make it well enough to recall his grievous sins. It is not right either to be so particular as to expect to be able to confess all small imperfections and light faults. An act of interior humility, a sigh of regret, is enough to efface these. We cannot be so particular about other things; we are not accustomed to run to our Superiors with every little pain that we feel, which perhaps will have passed off in a quarter of an hour. We must learn to bear these little things which we cannot remedy. For the most part, they are the natural outcome of our imperfect nature—such as fickleness of mood, will, and wish—that cause us disappointment, or make us one moment anxious to talk and another unwilling to do so. To these and the like faults we are subject, and shall be as long as we live in this

[1] Prov. xxiv. 16. [2] Ps. xxxvi. 24. [3] Letter 788.

perishable and passing life. You ask me," goes on the Saint, " how you can make your act of contrition in a short time. I answer that scarcely any time at all is needed to do it thoroughly well, since all that has to be done is to prostrate oneself in a humble spirit before God, and regret having offended Him.[1] To exercise an act of the will is a wonderful power that God has bestowed upon us, and in consequence of that *you have contrition by the very fact that you desire to have it.* You do not feel it—perhaps not. The fire that is under the ashes is neither seen nor felt, but the fire is there nevertheless."[2]

II. Abuse of Confession.

Our troubled and afflicted penitents, unfortunately, do not always follow the advice we give them. They allege all sorts of pretexts for renewing confessions or making general confessions; something was forgotten; they had not prepared themselves thoroughly; they did not express themselves clearly, or their contrition was insufficient. They might remember that they have already gone through more than is necessary, and that the more they exercise themselves in this way the more trouble they will create for themselves. Moreover, they should reflect that they expose themselves to real and serious dangers by wishing to sound the depths of their conscience at every conceivable moment. It is for them like stirring up the mud of a pond whence arise unhealthy exhalations. It is

[1] *Entretien* xiv. and xviii.
[2] *Cf. Treatise of the Love of God,* ix. 3.

like stirring up a fire, or like expecting to put out a conflagration with oil. Their scrutiny of self exposes them to the danger of committing faults far worse than those which are actually giving them trouble.

It is useless to tell the scrupulous penitent that his point of view is quite opposed to Christian simplicity. He has a special faculty for complicating what is most simple and obscuring, and befogging what is as clear as day. If you give advice which does not fit in with preconceived plans, the penitent supposes he has not been rightly understood, and that therefore your observations have no application to his case. Such penitents are in danger of falling into the way of a certain pious man who took six months to make a careful review of his life, and went to Confession every day. His confessor died, and he went to make a stipulation with another. He requested the priest to grant him two hours' interview every day; for the rest of the day he promised to examine and write down all his faults; when he had got through the whole list, he would allow himself a month to prepare to receive absolution. He deluded himself into the hope that he might settle all his doubts and anxieties in this way.

The story recalls the case of a religious of our acquaintance. He had been a professor of theology, and he developed an idea that he had taught so many errors and had been so negligent in the discharge of his duties that no one would absolve him except a friend of his, a Bishop, who used to speak of him as " so wise and yet so silly !"

As every other means of allaying his anxieties had

failed, the Bishop at length promised to procure from Rome all the powers necessary to absolve him from the censures he might have incurred. The professor satisfied himself that the documents containing the faculties were regular and authentic, and then fixed a day for his confession. As soon as he had made his accusation, he requested that a religious might be present to witness that the Bishop pronounced the absolution correctly. Eventually the Father declared that he was satisfied, and went away quite contented. He had not gone far, however, from the Bishop's house when he stopped his companion and said: "Everything seemed correct, but how do I know that His Lordship really had the intention to absolve me?" All the assurances of his friend were useless. The scruples were as persistent as ever; the poor man remained in his pitiable state. This good religious was thus totally incapable of controlling his own imagination, whilst in directing others he was noted for his ability, clearness, and prudence. Priests and religious, as well as lay persons, were accustomed to consult him in their difficulties.

Examples of this kind might be multiplied indefinitely; but these are sufficient to show how fatal are the consequences of scruples. It is not to be wondered at that simple folk who know little or nothing of theology are afflicted when persons of such extensive knowledge are not spared.

In these cases the penitent is tempted to go from one confessor or director to another in the hope of finding the one who will satisfy him. Their ideal director must cure them in a few moments, or must

let them talk without any remark at all, and agree with them in every detail. There are but too many that think the only way of serving God is their way.

A further consequence is to imagine that as no director understands them, their state is known only to themselves. Insensibly they become more and more self-opinionated, and open the way to untold evils. With such an absence of humility they cannot expect the graces that God gives only to the *humble*, and to them that become as little children.[1]

In other words, these deluded penitents are left to their own lights, and may be ranked with those who in various ages have rebelled against the Church under the pretext of reforming others without reforming themselves. Like abandoned ships, they must necessarily drift until they encounter the rocks of serious disaster. Perhaps a short life, the intervention of a special grace, or the aid of a kind friend, may save them; but in any case they will have wasted and embittered a portion of their own life, and perhaps have brought sorrow and scandal upon others. The merit of their afflictions will have been squandered.[2]

[1] Luke xviii. 16.

[2] Merit is the worth of an action rendering that action deserving of reward. Merit depends essentially on charity (St. Thomas, 1. 2, *Q*. 114, *A*. 4), and the principle of charity is grace. In a secondary manner merit depends on the value of an act. And this is absolute or relative. The former is that which the act contains of itself; the latter is the value arising from the effort made in accomplishing the act. In this sense difficulty may increase merit, inasmuch as greater charity is needed to surmount the difficulty (1 p., *Q*. 95, *A*. 4 (corp.) and *ad*. 2; 2. 2, *Q*. 27, *A*. 8 *ad* 3; *Q*. 182, *A*. 2 *ad* 1). It may hence be inferred that the most difficult deed is not always the most meritorious—because it is not always best in itself.

These are the sad fruits of stubbornness and of the spirit which says, *Non serviam* (" I will not serve "[1]).

" No one can claim to be self-sufficient," says St. Basil;[2] and this is why St. Bernard has written that " he who would be his own guide is a fool's disciple."[3] Holy Writ gives us the same warning when it tells us not to rely upon our own prudence,[4] but always to take advice of a wise counsellor.[5]

III. Remedies.

If the case be not already too bad, and at such a stage that there is nothing left for the priest but to adopt a course of pity, prayer, and penance, to try to regain the afflicted soul, what remedy can be applied to the evil ? There is but one, and that is *Obedience*. It is a simple one, and one that is of absolute necessity for all souls that are sincerely anxious about their spiritual advancement. " They who would go forward in the way of perfection," says St. Philip Neri, " have simply to obey their confessor as holding the place of God in their regard. By so doing they may make sure of not having to render to God an account of their actions."

When subject to scruples, one must surrender his independence and rely upon the spiritual director, who receives from heaven the light to carry out the delicate duty of guidance. He must be like the blind, who cannot find his own way, or like a mirror who is incapable of managing his own affairs. Obedi-

[1] Jer. ii. 20. [2] *Orat. de Felic.* [3] Epist. 87.
[4] Prov. iii. 5. [5] Tob. iv. 19.

ence must in these cases be complete and unrestricted. It is God Who is obeyed when the Spiritual Father of the soul is obeyed, since the priest holds his authority from Our Lord Himself: "He that heareth you, heareth Me."[1] On this point the teaching of theologians, masters of the spiritual life, and Saints, is quite unanimous.

Whilst insisting on the importance of obedience, we do not lose sight of the fact that many a scrupulous person finds himself unable to *will* or to come to a decision, much less to carry his decision into execution. Such persons will often, with a full understanding of what disobedience entails, wilfully disregard the orders of their director or their medical adviser to obey their own morbid impulse. A case of this came to our notice recently. A lady, who is both intelligent and conscientious, wrote from a sanatorium where she was undergoing treatment: "I will force myself to obey with regard to . . . This is the chief cause of all my trouble, and if only I could bring myself to feel that I am under an obligation never to speak of it again, I know my cure would be already far advanced. How I wish I could soon assure you that I really have obeyed! I must hope at the same time that my lack of obedience arises from my malady, otherwise it would be dreadful to contemplate." This person had already reached that state of impressionability in which it was quite impossible for her to distinguish between temptation and sin.

If a scrupulous person should make up his mind, he will usually carry it out there and then. The

[1] Luke x. 16.

same is to be said of the self-control of such persons. To declare that they always can control themselves if they wish is as false as to assert that a man can control a fever or to say that one can preserve health by willing it.

The doctor and the confessor have to use their influence to awaken, stimulate, and develop what remains of will-power in order to lead these afflicted ones gradually to carry out what is prescribed to them. Friends and relatives, too, can assist greatly in this matter. Their influence will generally be found to be in proportion to the confidence that the sufferers place in them. Hence, it must again be said, kindness and gentleness must be shown towards them, and these must be maintained by patience and perseverance in every difficulty. Dr. Dubois, without being a theologian, recognized the truth: "On ne péche jamais par persévérance" (Perseverance is always a virtue).

When obedience is practised we have a proof that the evil is not as serious as it might be, and that the patient is on the road to recovery, or at least is making some progress.

In some instances obedience will be given under the direction of one person who has more than ordinary influence over the patient, and then frequently only in certain matters or not regularly. This same influence may even be suddenly lost, usually for very trivial causes or without any apparent motive, so utterly unreliable are the scrupulous. The same may occur with the confidence they give their most intimate friends. This is easily understood, as that influence or confidence is inti-

mately connected with their submission, and this latter is a consequence of the former.

It is obvious that God can, if He so wishes it, operate directly upon souls; but, generally speaking, He does not do so, because the ordinary way is sufficient. He has established the priesthood as a ministry between Himself and the souls of men. Just as those that suffer must recognize the hand of God in their cross, so in the priest must they see the envoy of God invested with His powers, who is to teach them how to carry the cross. At times they may think of the priest or even speak of him, as incapable of helping them, as one indifferent to their trouble, as one who labours in the ministry for self-interest, or even as one whose ministrations would harm them. The right view is to regard him as a true and safe guide, a faithful and compassionate friend, who has been commissioned to instruct, direct, and sustain them in the way of sorrow in which God has placed them for their sanctification. Let all those, then, that are in affliction be thoroughly persuaded that it is in *obedience* to these messengers of God, and not in self-love, in their own judgment, and in an obstinate following of their own opinion, that they will find that peace which is so much to be desired, and is promised by the Apostle in those words to the Galatians: "Whosoever shall follow this rule, peace on them and mercy."[1]

"Consider," says St. Francis de Sales, "that the attachment to our own ideas and the esteem we have for them is the reason that there are so few

[1] Gal. vi. 16.

who are perfect. Many persons may be found to renounce their own wills in one matter or another, not merely in the cloister, but even amongst seculars, and even in the courts of Princes. If a Prince bids his courtier perform some act, he would not think of refusing to obey; but it does not so frequently happen that one looks on the command as the best policy to follow. One will say: 'I will do what you tell me, and as you tell me, but . . .' People hesitate at the 'but,' which indicates that they think it might be better otherwise. There can be no doubt that such an attitude is far from perfect. Its result is ordinarily to cause unrest of the mind and murmurings, and to increase self-love; so that one's own opinion and judgment should not be so closely adhered to.

"Consider, also, that attachment to our own judgment is the last thing we give up, and yet it is one of the most necessary to renounce in order to acquire perfection. Until we have surrendered our own judgment we cannot proceed far in humility, which forbids us to make any account of ourselves or of what depends upon us. As long as we do not hold this virtue in high esteem, we shall always think ourselves better than we are, and that others must recognize it too."[1]

"The exercise that should be undertaken to suppress one's private judgment is to refuse to argue with it when it tries to assert its superiority, and make it thus understand it must be a servant and not a master. It is only by oft-repeated acts that we can acquire virtue under ordinary circumstances,

[1] St. Francis de Sales, *Entretien* xiv.

though we know that in exceptional cases God has bestowed virtues all at once."[1]

"Unless," says Tauler, "you tear all self-love out of your heart, and cast it far from you, wherever you turn or seek your safety you will always meet with agitation and hardship. Until a man leaves self, the more he tries to escape the less is his hope of finding what he wants. He is wandering out of the right road."[2]

To avoid the evil, therefore, there is but one thing to be done—namely, to go out of oneself and practise self-renunciation.

"If any will come to Me," Our Lord says, "let him deny himself."[3] Nothing is more displeasing to God than an inordinate attachment to self-will. "Do away with self-will," says St. Bernard, "and you do away with hell."[4]

Notwithstanding the high authority of the priest, and the right and duty this carries with it to command, we do not maintain that a penitent must abdicate the use of his reason or surrender his liberty even when we insist on the matter of Obedience. On the contrary, we say it is a duty of conscience to use these. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."[5] But when once the penitent has freely confided his difficulties to the spiritual physician, he must see that it is his duty to submit, accept this guidance, and obey without seeking out excuses and trying to withdraw from obedience. "It is like the sin of witchcraft, to

[1] *Entretien* x.
[2] *Institutions*, chap. xiv.
[3] Luke ix. 23.
[4] *Serm. III., Resurrectionis.*
[5] 2 Cor. iii. 17.

rebel; and like the crime of idolatry, to refuse to obey."[1] Without obedience there is nothing to guide him but conjecture and chance, without any means of certainty as to what is good or bad. To those especially who are beset with scruples the experience and knowledge of theologians and ascetical writers must count for something, otherwise they place the disciple above the Master, and, reversing the order that God has set in human society, they cannot hope to obtain from Him the solution of their difficulties. Such would be a clear tempting of Providence. "God submits to obey a man," says Father Ridolfi, "and thou, a poor creature, art unwilling to obey God, Who speaks to thee through thy fellow-man."[2]

Though God has invested the priest with a special character, and bestows upon him special graces and the assistance of His Holy Spirit, at the same time the priest needs the concurrence of his penitent that his ministration may bear fruit. The penitent must bring docility and that childlike simplicity to which is promised the kingdom of heaven.[3] With these, the help of the priest will always be beneficial. It is according to the Will of God that we all make good use of the reason and will with which He has endowed us under the influence of grace, and with docility to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. God, Who sees deep down into the heart, and proportions the outpouring of His grace to our good intentions, confidence, and faith, will then do the rest.

[1] 1 Kings xv. 23.
[2] *Courte Méthode pour faire l'Oraison Mentale.* Paris, J. Vie.
[3] Matt. xix. 14.

St. Francis de Sales says: " The proverb borrowed from St. Bernard, ' Hell is full of good intentions or desires,' must not be allowed to upset us. There are two kinds of good intentions. The one may be expressed thus: ' I should like to do well, but it is too much trouble, and I can't '; the other says: ' I make up my mind to do well, but the wish goes farther than my strength, and I am always being hindered.' The first of these it is that fills hell; the second leads to Paradise. The former only begins to will and desire, and never develops. Such wishes and desires have no courage in them, and are abortive; that is why they end badly. But the other does produce full and well-formed desires, such as those for which Daniel was called the '*Man of Desires*.' "[1]

Since God has promised to assist his servants when in presence of their enemies, His assistance must surely be the more ready when they go to His specially commissioned representative and friend. " The best way," says St. Francis de Sales, " is to go blindly along under the guidance of Divine Providence amidst the darkness and the perplexities of life. Let it be enough to know from one's Spiritual Father that the road is the right one. We can never be lost through obedience."

Father Alvarez de Paz speaks in much the same terms. " I am certain," he says, " that remedies prescribed against scruples will avail only for those who will submit to their spiritual father, and allow themselves to be led by his orders. As for those who will not confide in a director, *it is certain that they are not to be cured*. They can only be regarded

[1] Letter 66.

as incurables until they do submit to him who has charge of them, and follow his advice implicitly, whilst they have a genuine confidence in God."

"The word of our Lord bidding us take up the cross," again writes St. Francis de Sales, "must be applied to all the contradictions met with in the matter of obedience, even though they be light and seemingly unimportant."[1] "Blessed are the obedient, for God will never suffer them to go astray."[2]

This has been the way of perfection for all the Saints. Without exception, all have lovingly borne the little crosses of obedience. St. Gertrude, being of a very delicate constitution, was often unable to carry out the rule of her Order; but she was able to obey, and this was her means of attaining to sanctity. Instead of fulfilling, as she would have wished, all the austerities of the convent, and going to choir to sing the praises of the Lord with her sisters, she had often to give up these delights and keep her cell, and even her bed, as the Superior ordered. She submitted with all the readiness that she would have shown in doing just what pleased her most. She knew that she would find Divine favours wherever Obedience might send her. Our Lord testified to St. Mechtildis, her companion, His pleasure at this obedience. In one of her revelations it is related that He said that if one would find Him, He must be sought first in the Blessed Sacrament, and then in the heart of Gertrude.

St. Alphonsus Liguori, and his religious with him, practised extraordinary austerities. He ordered

[1] *Entretien* xv.
[2] *Introduction to the Devout Life*, part iii., chap. xi.

Father d'Agostino to remit these during a Mission, as he suffered from weakness of the chest, and required him to take chocolate every morning for his breakfast. Though the religious was grieved to have this special exemption made for him, he obeyed the injunction of his Superior without any objection.[1]

When St. Ignatius once suffered from a slight indisposition, he obeyed his doctor and ate meat on Holy Thursday. St. Francis de Sales remarks: "A scrupulous or less docile person would have prayed for two or three days, and then would have had his own way."

Persons troubled with scruples must further bear in mind that some prescriptions are laid down only for those that are in a normal state and are equal to the observance of them. They must not forget that many are not obliged to observe fasts nor to undertake exercises of devotion which cause them strain, whether physical or mental. Some are so overcome with feelings of anxiety that they are not bound to the integrity of Confession,[2] as we already noted above. When Confession or Holy Communion is found to cause fatigue or nervous excitement, the sufferer should inform the confessor, who can then study each particular case and regulate as necessary the reception of the Sacraments. Too much prudence cannot be used in so delicate a matter.

If anyone should be pained at the restriction im-

[1] *Life of St. Alph. Liguori, op. cit.*, t. i., chap. xii.
[2] Abbé J. Berthier, *Abrégé de Théologie, De la Conscience*, chap. ii. Lyon, Nouvellet.

posed, it should be borne in mind that the cheerful and submissive acceptance of the cross may produce important helps to salvation, and make up in some degree at least for the graces attached to the reception of the Sacraments. In any case, every time they renounce their own will they can rest satisfied that they fulfil the will of God, and what could be more reassuring and consoling?

St. Francis of Sales wrote in one of his letters: "Do not be upset at not being able to serve God after your own way. By adapting yourself to the difficulties of your position you are serving Him in His way, which is better than yours."[1] To another person he writes: "With regard to your Communions, let your confessor guide you. Give him this satisfaction, and you will not lose anything. What you do not gain through the Sacraments will be made up to you for your submission and obedience."[2]

"God," says St. John of the Cross, "is better pleased with your least act of obedience and submission to His will than with the service that you may propose to render Him by your own choice and inclination."[3]

For certain scrupulous characters it is best for them to make no special preparation for their confession. It will be sufficient for them to say what occurs to their memory when they are in the confessional, or to answer the questions of the confessor. When once the confession is over, they should be careful not to occupy their thoughts with that any further, otherwise they will expose them-

[1] Letter 158. [2] Letter 774. [3] *Vie*, t. iii., p. 342.

selves to a return, and perhaps in a worse form, of the disquiet that the confession was intended to remove. The same, of course, applies to past confessions and troubles, and the remark is of more importance than is generally thought.

Even stricter methods are required for some cases. They need to be called to make their confession without warning. When the confession is over and the penance performed (and this should be done in the confessional, to obviate the danger of forgetting it), someone must take charge of them, to turn their thoughts away from their confession and the scruples it might be likely to raise. For this purpose a person might be taken for a walk, or some reading or conversation taken up—anything, in fact, may be done that will serve as a distraction or occupation sufficient to engage the attention and keep it away from the subject matter of confession. If these persons were left to fix the time of confession for themselves, they would spend whole days and sleepless nights in a state of agitation—as many of them attest when they have had to rely upon themselves in this matter. It is not for the patient to tell the surgeon when he shall perform an operation. Facts prove that the scrupulous must be considered in a similar position, as the writer himself has experienced.

Some penitents will never be found ready. Occasion occurred to me one day to inquire of a patient of the institution why she was not at Confession at the usual fixed hour with the others. She answered that contrition had not yet come, and I was requested to return to the confessional.

Another observation is of importance as to the treatment of the scrupulous. It is very necessary to know how to settle a matter once for all. One must be plain-spoken, clear, and precise. Having heard the penitent's case with all possible kindness, and, if necessary, having questioned him or her to obtain a definite view, any advice should be given categorically. "Do this, avoid that," or "Be very careful not to act in such and such a manner," or "I forbid you absolutely to do this or that until further order."

The confessor must beware of putting in conditions. "If this occupation tires you, leave it alone," "If it worries or troubles you or excites you, etc., do not do it," "You are not *obliged* to do this or that," "*Try*, and then you will see what you can do."

Any sign of doubt or hesitation of this kind would only make the penitent conclude that his state was very serious and complex, since even the confessor with all his authority is not able to settle the matter with certainty. Or else he will think —and perhaps not wrongly—that this indicates that the priest does not understand him, or that he is not capable of doing so, or that he will not be troubled with the case. When he seeks advice, it is with the idea of being helped out of his difficulties. If he is to remain in them he requires no one's interference.

IV. Of Candour in Confession.

Moral sickness, like the physical, cannot be satisfactorily dealt with unless it and its causes be thoroughly understood. Consequently penitents must commence by a clear avowal of their faults and the sources of them.

A very groundless fear prevents some patients from observing this condition. Either from extreme nervousness, or perhaps self-love, their minds are fully taken up with what idea the priest will form of them. The thoughts, though natural in a sense, are yet unworthy of a Catholic, and it must be remembered that there is a supernatural end in view and natural considerations must therefore give way. Those fears mean waste of time for priest and penitent, for this world and the next. What the priest thinks is that he is dealing with a soul which God sends to him, and of which he must give an account at the judgment. He knows he has a strict duty to help that soul. Besides all this, the priest's opinion of the penitent is not of any importance. It cannot alter the degree of sanctity that the soul possesses. The soul's true worth is what it is in God's sight. Then, of course, the penitent knows that the priest will use all possible discretion in the Sacred Tribunal, and that the confidence there given never will be betrayed to the day of his death. God will reward the submission of the penitent by bestowing on the priest the light he will need to direct the soul confided to him, and the good that will result may be said to be in proportion to the candour with which the confession

is made. "The opening of the heart," says St. Alphonsus Liguori, "drives away temptation as the sun drives away the clouds."[1]

Then there are those that talk untiringly to the confessor about everything except the essential matter. They have a special gift for escaping his influence. Even if he chances to place his finger on the wound, they are unwilling to recognize the evil, so as to avoid the pain of making the sacrifice that they foresee will be demanded of them.

They are very much like the child that was being taught to pray, and when told to repeat the words, "O my God, I leave and give over to you all that I have," etc., was anxious to say, "Except my rabbit." It is the special attachment that they will not break. One cannot give up certain foods or an easy way of life; another studies and favourite reading—it is always something that gives a particular pleasure and has grown into a passion or second nature. At the same time, it is well known that without privation there can be no question of cure or improvement to the end.

With them it must be as with the poor creature dying of alcoholism. With his feeble, dying voice he asks of every visitor if he has brought something for him to drink.

Consequently the penitent must reveal his conscience with full confidence to the man of God who is to direct him. It is a general rule for the priest to make himself "all things to all men,"[2] and he is

[1] *Op. cit.*, t. ii., chap. xviii.

[2] 1 Cor. ix. 22: "To the weak I became weak that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men, that I might save all."

not likely to forget this in dealing with the afflicted members of Christ who have a special claim upon his goodness. The priest will readily recognize that he has to deal with " a cruel and stubborn affliction which calls for much charity and patience. He is well aware that if the penitent, overcome with scruples, does not find a sympathetic confessor, he must lose his reason, and perhaps, as it has occurred in some instances, be tempted to do away with himself in his despair."[1]

At the same time, these penitents must use some discretion with their confessor, so as to avoid encroaching too much upon valuable time, upon which other demands are to be made, not to mention his personal requirements. On this matter Fénelon writes thus: " If it were clearly realized what time means to the priest, people would be more fearful of wasting his precious hours in useless talk. A priest's duty is to pray for himself and for the whole Church, to meditate deeply upon the law of God, and to labour in various ways for the salvation of sinners. If all his penitents merely come to have the doctrine of the Gospels applied to their case, but little time would be needed for direction. The most upright souls seek to talk little and do much."

In matters so important as those relating to the spiritual welfare it seems strange that there should be any difficulty in the giving an implicit confidence, and in the exercise of submission and obedience—that, in other words, mere human considerations should exert so much influence. The reason must surely be that so many form a false idea of the

[1] Cardinal Gousset, *Théologie Morale*, t. ii., chap. xv.

priest and of the supernatural, judging of both either according to the maxims of the world or according to their own narrow conceptions. They lose sight of the fact that the sacerdotal ministry must be founded and exercised upon a far more solid basis than that of human wisdom, for it is a supernatural mission. The priest who is faithful to his vocation expects all his help from God, and not from the world.

CHAPTER III

ON TEMPTATION AND SIN

THERE are many who, in the enjoyment of the blessing of good health, delude themselves and treat the law of God with an indifference that is beyond all excuse.

On the other hand, we find that many who are afflicted form an exaggerated idea of the rigours of God's laws, confuse temptation with sin, and fail to recognize the distinction between mere feelings and deliberate consent.

St. Francis de Sales says: "We must have great courage in temptations, and never think we are overcome as long as they displease us, bearing in mind that there is a great difference between feeling and consent (*sentir* et y *consentir*). We can feel without taking pleasure in the sensation. But we cannot consent without pleasure; that pleasure is, in fact, one degree of consent."[1]

Whether temptation proceeds from our enemy, the devil,[2] or from the attraction of concupiscence,[3] we know that we are all weak in a greater or less degree, and exposed to temptation and sin by

[1] *Introduction to the Devout Life*, part iv., chap. iii.
[2] 1 Pet. v. 8.
[3] James i. 14. *Cf.* St. Thomas, p. i., *Q*. 114, *A*. 3.

reason of our fallen nature. But we know equally well that this danger does not mean sin. There is a wide difference between temptation and a fall.

Again, it is well understood that sin is disobedience against the law of God, but that disobedience is only committed by knowing and willing the fault. Hence two conditions are required for every sin: (1) the recognition of the law, and (2) the remembrance of the law at the time of transgressing. Whether in light or grievous sin the *will* must be active. Where the will has no part there can be no sin, and in order to *will* an object it must be *known*. It would be strange indeed if we could be charged with sin without willing or suspecting it. "Take the example," says the Bishop of Belley, "of a looking-glass. It mirrors clearly whatever is set before it; but the object is not in the glass." Something the same happens with our heart. It is a mirror . . . wherein the devil uses his cunning to represent hell's most hideous, infamous, and abominable scenes. But nothing but the will can open the door to these hateful objects. Therefore let the devil go through all his grimaces, let him depict the foulest images before your mind, let him utter in the ears of your soul the most detestable and impious blasphemies that can be imagined—nothing of all this can make you guilty. Even though, as our holy Father, St. Francis de Sales, says, these temptations should last your life through, they could not stain you with a single sin. You will say that your only fear is with regard to your wavering sentiments. And I hold with the whole of theology —which is much more sure than your apprehensions

—that you can no more mix doubt and consent together than you can certainty and uncertainty. For consent presupposes so full an acquiescence on the part of the soul and a determination so absolute that it leaves no room for doubt. The surest indication of not having consented is to have a doubt about the consent. I would not make a capital sin consist in anything less than a determination of the will, leaving behind it no doubt whatever of its malice. Yes, you will reply, let me have as many temptations and crosses as you please, provided only I may be sure of not offending God. And in saying this, is it possible that you do not see you are shirking the cross? This is the way in which self-love plays its part and subtly disquiets you. Humble yourself before God, and acknowledge that He knows better than you yourself what is to your welfare."[1]

Instead of allowing themselves to be disturbed by temptations, all scrupulous souls should submit entirely to the particular points of advice laid down by the director. As a general rule of conduct the scrupulous might follow the principles set forth by St. Antoninus. These directions should have the more weight as their author, besides enjoying a wide reputation for knowledge and holiness, has been classed amongst the more rigid theologians. If these persons will carefully ponder his words, they will readily perceive that, in spite of his established reputation for severity, the Saint is yet by no means as severe as they are themselves. This is the more remarkable, as he writes for all the faithful, and not certainly for that class of persons with whom

[1] *Lettre Spirituelle*, quoted by Boudon, *op. cit.*

we are dealing here—nervous and troubled and scrupulous souls.

"When," he says, "a precept is susceptible of a twofold interpretation—one strict and the other more gentle—other things being equal, this latter must be preferred. The reason is because the commands of God and the Church have not been framed so as to destroy all spiritual sweetness, which must inevitably disappear under a too narrow and fearsome interpretation. The intention of God and His Church is not to prescribe the impossible, because, according to the law of justice, '*no one can be bound to that which he cannot perform.*' Now, in the new law, the word *impossible* would seem to mean that which is hardly possible, as presenting too great a difficulty. Otherwise, how can we explain those words of Our Lord, '*My yoke is sweet*'?"[1]

[1] Under every circumstance we should recollect that when we find it difficult to form a decision, it is always preferable, by far, to lean to the side of *mercy*, and to take for our device what this great Saint has written: "It is always better to have to render account to God for showing too much mercy than for using too much severity."

A religious was constantly telling a certain Father John that he was too good. "Well," he answered, "I prefer to fail by excess of goodness. When I go before God, He will not reproach me with that. And if He should, I would say: 'Oh, my good Master, for all that I may do, I can never be so good as Thou hast been Thyself'" (*op cit.*).

Anastasius, Abbot of Mount Sinai, who lived in the seventh century, relates this story: A religious of the monastery, whose life was coming to an end, seemed to give himself but little thought about his approaching death. He had frequently been dispensed from the spiritual exercises of the community, and had not seemed so very assiduous in the practice of virtue as to be able to draw any exceptional motives for calmness and tranquillity from his past career. The abbot who attended him in his last illness recalled his lack of fervour in the past, and asked him the reason of his

The rigid views of the scrupulous, then, differ widely from the indulgent teaching of great theologians and Saints. This should serve as a motive to make any soul in trouble regulate itself according to well-founded principles rather than after private judgment or a diseased imagination. Only thus can such a soul rid itself—slowly, perhaps, but surely—of those fearful anxieties and illusions which it is ever bewailing, and which constantly add to its burden of affliction.

But instead of this, we find that the troubled mind wants to know positively whether a sin has been committed, and also whether it amounts to a grievous sin. In many cases, according to St. Augustine, it is difficult, and for that reason dangerous, to scrutinize an action too closely to find out its nature.[1] St. Thomas Aquinas,[2] St. Antoninus,[3] and St. Alphonsus Liguori,[4] all agree in teaching the same doctrine.

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calmness. "Fear not, my Father," he replied; "God has sent me an angel to assure me that I shall be saved according to His own words: 'Judge not and you shall not be judged; condemn not and you shall not be condemned'" (Luke vi. 37). "It is true that weak health and my little fervour have often prevented me from satisfying all the duties of the community life. But, thanks to Our Lord, I have always taken with patience the hard treatment that my failings have brought upon me. I have always forgiven everything from my heart, and have tried to interpret all as well as I could. This it is that now constitutes my joy."

In this good religious were verified these words of Holy Writ: "To the righteous a light is risen up in darkness; he is merciful and compassionate and just" (Ps. cxi. 4); "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. v. 7).

[1] *De Civitate*, lib. xxi., cap. xxxvii. [2] *Quodlibet*, ix., *A*. 15.
[3] *Sum.*, part 2, lib. i., cap. xi. [4] *De Peccatis*, 51.

When Saints and Doctors like these give such advice, it is not to be expected that the more simple, and certainly not those whose consciences are disturbed, can easily reach a solution. In any case, what purpose can it serve and what profit can it afford to know the precise nature of a sin? There can be no solid gain, but, as we have pointed out, there may be real danger. The only necessary and practical knowledge to be sought is whether any particular act is good or bad, prescribed, or forbidden, or permitted. Beyond this it is not necessary to go, but for all that is evil to make acts of contrition and trust in God. We will hear St. Francis de Sales again on this matter. "When," he says, "we cannot decide whether we have fulfilled our duty on some occasion, and we fear that we may have offended God, we must then humble ourselves and beg God to excuse us, ask Him to grant us more light on a similar occasion, and then try and forget the past and set ourselves diligently to our ordinary duty. That curious and anxious study to learn whether we have done well without doubt arises from self-love, which makes us wish to think well of ourselves, whereas the pure love of God would rather make us say within ourselves: 'Poor cowardly creature that you are, humble yourself before the mercy of God, and ask His pardon. Make a fresh promise of fidelity, and set to work to insure your spiritual advancement.' "[1]

Elsewhere the Saint speaks of this self-love as the

[1] Lettre 808, édit. Blaise. "Better to me," says the *Imitation*, "is Thine abundant mercy for the obtaining of pardon, than the justice which I imagine in myself for the defence of my hidden conscience" (bk. iii., chap. xlvi.).

meddler that wants to be in everything without doing good anywhere. And, indeed, oftener than we think, perhaps, it is self-love that is at work much more than zeal and the desire of sanctity. Anyone will soon be persuaded of this who will make a strict self-examination with real sincerity. It will then appear that in many instances a good deal more regret is experienced at the humiliation caused by weakness and falls than at the offence shown to God or the harm caused to the soul. Much progress might soon be made if we could once renounce all the satisfaction of self-love where spiritual interest is concerned.

Hence it is clear that we must have a deep distrust of this importunate and subtle enemy—the first to assert itself in our nature, and the last to die. Such influence has self over even saintly persons that we read of solitaries being seduced after sixty or eighty years of penitential discipline. Of St. Teresa it is related that God showed her the place she would have had in hell if she had chosen to consent to certain suggestions of self-love. "Have a great fear of self-love," says St. Bernard. "It is like an arrow that pierces soul and heart almost imperceptibly, but its wound is not a light one. It may bring death to them that are not on their guard."[1] Holy Writ tells us that "pride goes before destruction, and the spirit is lifted up before a fall."[2]

On the other hand, as St. Francis de Sales remarks, "we must never be surprised that we have self-love in us, for it never will depart altogether.

[1] In Ps. xc. [2] Prov. xvi. 18.

It will sleep as the fox does, but on the first opportunity will pounce upon its prey. For this reason constancy is required in keeping watch, and also calmness and patience to defend ourselves; then, if sometimes the enemy wounds us, we can heal our wounds by regretting what he has induced us to do, and resolving against it. But we are cured only for the time—that is, until our weakness shows itself again—for we shall never be perfectly in health until we are in heaven."[1]

If the scrupulous person could but realize the harm that constant disquiet works he would be prepared to go to any length in order to allay all those fears instead of giving way to them by deliberating whether he has given any consent, and whether his fault be grievous or not. To reassure himself, he might compare his dispositions with those that are to be found in the sinner. The man who sins wilfully is not disturbed with all this uneasiness about it. He is not troubled by thoughts of his own frailty, how he must resist, or flee, or avoid temptations, or try to conquer them. He rather desires temptation; he looks out for occasions to do evil. His only complaint may be that he does not find all the satisfaction he hoped for. "As long as temptation displeases you," says St. Francis de Sales, "you have nothing to fear. For why does it displease you, if not because you do not want it? The frequency of the temptation comes from the devil, but the suffering and trouble you are caused come from God. Against the will of your enemy God produces tribulation for you out of his

[1] Letter 333; Entretien xx.

malice, and thereby refines the gold that He wishes to place in His treasury. Hence I say: Your temptations are from the devil, but your pains and afflictions are from God and from Heaven. The mothers are of Babylon, the daughters of Jerusalem. Despise the temptations, but accept the trouble of them."[1]

There is no reason, then, to be alarmed in temptation, but we must maintain a calm and cheerful resignation to God's good pleasure. Temptations can in no way interfere with the purity of heart of him who takes no pleasure in them. We should not consider them at all, but simply fix our gaze upon our Saviour, Who awaits us beyond the trial. We must keep up a great and strong love in Our Lord's service, caring not whether we meet bitter or sweet, and troubling about nothing so much as to be able to call upon the Name of Jesus at all times. Temptations only trouble us because we think too much about them, and fear them too much."[2]

With such assurance as these reflections are calculated to inspire one has only to leave oneself to God's infinite mercy, and to follow out the guidance of the confessor, bearing in mind that all our religion taken together is like one great concession of mercy to human misery.[3] Thus may peace of soul be maintained or recovered—that peace without which it is quite impossible to make any progress in holiness of life, which is so much

[1] *Œuvres*, edit. Vivès, t. x., p. 92.
[2] *Cf.* Père de la Rivière, *Vie de St. François de Sales*, chap. iv.
[3] Gerbet, *Considérations sur le Dogme Générateur*.

advanced by turning the trials of life to spiritual profit.[1]

In setting down these counsels we are not under any illusion with regard to the conflicts in which many souls have to engage. We are quite aware that there are most terrible temptations that never seem to cease. Some finish only with life itself, and maintain a force that many cannot even imagine. But whatever may be the nature, duration, and violence of all these, they are none of them invincible. "God will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able."[2] He gives grace in due proportion to the hardship, and "makes with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it."[3]

"It never can be thought," says St. Augustine, "that God has required strict observance to a law that He has made impossible for us; so that, when God has made us see how powerless we are of ourselves to carry out His precepts, He also tells us plainly that the more easy points of the law we can observe with the ordinary grace that He gives us, and in the more difficult duties there is always that more abundant succour which we can obtain by means of prayer."[4]

Ever since his first victory in the earthly Paradise the devil has not ceased to attack man and to devise every possible means of compassing his

[1] "Do not force yourself to overcome temptations," says St. Francis de Sales; "your efforts will only make them the stronger: rather despise them, and do not let your thoughts be taken up with them: the fear of them is the greatest evil they contain" (Letter 98).

[2] I Cor. x. 13. [3] *Ibid.* [4] In Ps. cii.

eternal loss, and he is but too often encouraged by easy and frequent success.

In doing all this the enemy is playing his part well. It is for man to be equally on the alert as regards his duty. He must *watch* and *pray* without ceasing, and with *unbounded confidence*.[1]

We must strive, then, with humility and perseverance, expecting all from God and nothing from self, and " the prince of this world will be cast out "[2] and humiliated every time he attacks the soul. By the same means concupiscence will be quelled without doing any injury. On every occasion the servant of God will go forth from temptation with greater

[1] According to Holy Writ: " mercy shall encompass him that hopeth in the Lord " (Ps. xxxi. 10); and, on the other hand, " He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool " (Prov. xxviii. 26). So when we speak of *unbounded confidence* we do not mean *in self*, but in God to Whom we address our prayers. This confidence does not exclude a deep distrust of self, as St. Francis de Sales explains in one of his letters: " There is no need for us to have doubts about our trust in God because we feel real difficulty in guarding against sin, or because we distrust our own powers in trials and temptations. No; diffidence of our own strength is not the same as a lack of resolution; it is simply a recognition of our misery. It is better to be diffident of our own powers in resisting temptations than to take it for granted that we shall be victorious, provided, of course, that what we do not expect of ourselves we remember we may expect from the grace of God.

It has happened that some, in times of great consolation, have promised themselves to do wonders for God, but when they came to the time of action, they failed. Whereas others who had great fears for their weakness, and trembled lest they might fail, have surpassed themselves in the time of trial. The deep feeling that they had of their own weakness induced them to seek the aid and succour of God, to watch and pray and humble themselves so as not to enter into temptation " (Letter 875).

[2] John xii. 31.

experience, with fresh strength, and new merits for heaven; with an increase of sympathy, too, for them that are tempted; with feelings of kindness and charity towards those that fall; with zeal to aid them, and in aiding them to raise himself yet higher, and to maintain his course along the right road.

"Whenever you perceive that you are tempted," says St. Francis de Sales, "do as children when they see a wolf or bear. They immediately run to the protection of father or mother, or at least cry out to them for help. Do you have recourse in the same way to God, calling for His mercy and help. This is the remedy taught us by Our Lord Himself: 'Pray, that you enter not into temptation.'"[1]

In fine, it would be well to have these words of Holy Scripture constantly before the mind: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him."[2] "He that striveth for the mastery is not crowned except he strive lawfully."[3] We trust that we have been able to throw a little light upon these rules, and may they be faithfully observed by all who are visited by tribulation.

[1] Matt. xxvi. 41; *Introduction to the Devout Life*, part 4, chap. vii.
[2] James i. 12. [3] 2 Tim. ii. 5.

CHAPTER IV

ON TEMPTATIONS AGAINST PURITY

Beyond all doubt temptations against holy purity are amongst the greatest sufferings that can afflict a man.[1]

Since the soul is the principle of life and being to the body, soul and body are substantially united in such a manner that the body can act physically upon the soul.[2] This action may consist of the disturbance of the soul by the resistance and struggle of the sensual part against the spiritual, when carnal appetites crave for satisfaction. As the soul is a simple and spiritual substance, it becomes a severe trial and probation for it to be exposed to the humiliating danger of surrendering to the evil tendencies of a composite and material body, with all the cravings of the animal nature. In fact, the material desires of the human body are even worse than they are in the lower creatures, since these are

[1] In the reading of this chapter it should be remembered that what we have said on *Temptation* and *Sin* applies equally, and in a special manner, to the kind of sin spoken of here. Scrupulous persons must never forget that to commit a sin in these matters it is not enough to be tempted.

[2] According to Cardinal Zigliara, it is more strictly correct to say that the soul acts upon itself through the medium of the body. *Cf. Summa Philosophiæ*, Psychologia, lib. i., chap. ii.

at peace as soon as their appetites are satisfied. If man once grants a concession to the suggestion of temptation, he is the more likely to yield on each future occasion. The more he humours carnal impulse, the more does the flesh rebel. It grows insatiable. One act of surrender prepares the next.[1]

Very often the evils of impure passion have some relation to the state of health, but in any case, if a free rein be allowed to animal cravings, all strength must quickly be exhausted, whether of body or of will. Examples of this fearful state are but too frequent, as may be seen from works of moral theology or medicine that treat of this delicate subject. On this point they show no difference of opinion.[2] The shameful vice that silently works such havoc in human society, degrades the soul, perverts the heart, obscures the reason, and ruins health. Bourdaloue writes: "Solomon was easily induced to fall down before idols of stone after he had worshipped idols of flesh, and the light of his intellect was soon darkened when he had wasted his affections on wicked creatures.'[3] So St. Alphonsus Liguori says with reason that this kind of sin destroys the greatest number of souls,[4] because obstinacy in evil is a natural consequence of it,[5]

[1] The language of Byron in the midst of worldly pleasure is a good illustration of this.

[2] *Cf. La Théologie Morale et les Sciences Médicales*, par le P. Debreyne; *Pastoral-Medizin*, von Dr. Capellmann; *Education de Soi-même*, par Dr. Tissot.

[3] *Sermon sur l'Impureté.*

[4] *Theol. Moral*, lib. iii., tract. iv.

[5] *Œuvres Complètes*, edit. Dujardin, t. xv., serm. 45. In this sermon he quotes a number of texts relating to the evils of impurity. From St. Jerome he borrows these

and also because, when a man is a "slave to pleasure, he becomes an enemy of truth."[1]

Temptations against purity are not, as some imagine, necessarily connected with certain forms of nervous maladies. At the same time, it is true that whilst some nervous patients are so free from any trouble of the kind as not even to have any suspicion of it, others, on the contrary, are so tried that they seem to be able to find no respite. Thoughts, imaginations, and desires pursue them everywhere. They are not free from them even at prayer or in the reception of the Sacraments. Their sleep is disturbed by them, and often they awake suddenly through the shock of some frightful dream. All the faculties at times seem to be affected, and this trouble would appear to be the one exclusive evil influence of their lives. In a word, these impure suggestions become a real obsession. The victims of it feel unable to occupy themselves with any other thought or occupation, and in this state they feel incapable of forming a judgment as to what is *temptation* or what is *consent*.

Frequently the fear of these temptations is enough

words: "Impurity is an infernal fire that is kept alive by gluttony, that shows itself in evil talk, and that ends in eternal damnation." He speaks of the vice as the principal entrance into hell, and adds: "God is merciful even with this sin," but yet it is this that plunges so many souls into the eternal fires. St. Remigius says that most of the souls in hell have gone there through this vice. As Father Segneri says: "Impurity fills this world with sinners, and therefore fills hell with reprobates." St. Bernardine of Siena had expressed the same thought before: "This sin drags down vast numbers of the human race, even tc eternal torment" (*cf.* t. xvi., p. 77).

[1] Bossuet, *Traité de la Concupiscence.*

to excite them, and stamps them the more vividly on the imagination; and if the mere apprehension of the temptations has this effect of exciting the imagination, it may readily be conceived how disturbing must be the result in those persons whose nervous state renders them so excitable and liable to mental disturbance. The strained condition of the emotions must make them seem to be absolutely besieged by these persistent temptations. They thence find themselves powerless to divert their reason and will to other thoughts, occupations, and impressions, and they seem to be chained down, as it were, in the midst of evils, and forced to use their reason to discover whether they may have consented, and to what extent. Thus these persons really render the attacks more dangerous by making them more persistent. The suffering is augmented by the fear of not being able to continue victorious against the onset, of not being able to serve God in this state, and of not being able to do anything that will contribute to the salvation of the soul. Their state leads them to conclude that some mysterious and irresistible power urges them to commit evil.

A number of hysterical or nervously affected persons are inclined to view their troubles as a punishment for past faults. They imagine that their temptations may be only the beginning of the chastisement they will have to undergo in the next life. For the enlightenment of such persons it may be well to explain that souls far advanced in perfection, many who are canonized Saints, have gone through similar trials. This is a consideration

which may well dispel all thoughts of discouragement such as may easily beset those weak souls who find it so hard to make any lasting effort to combat the fear with which the prospect of being tempted inspires them.

We give, therefore, a few examples to show how groundless is any feeling of discouragement in these matters.

We read of the Venerable Cesar de Bus, the founder of the Fathers of Christian Doctrine, that, together with other sufferings—and his blindness was not the least of these—he was afflicted during a great part of his life with fearful temptations.

The foundress of the religious of Notre Dame (Canonesses of Notre Dame), Mère Thérèse de Jésus, was another sufferer, as she herself relates. The author of her Life writes: "The attacks were so violent and persistent, her temptations so frightful, that it has been judged well to speak of them only in general terms, so as not to terrify the weak."[1]

In order to combat these humiliating trials, St. Francis is related to have cast himself into the snow, St. Benedict amongst thorns, and St. Bernard plunged into a frozen pond. "When I wish to enter into myself," wrote this last Saint, "these temptations rush upon me in such a way as to scatter all my thoughts."

It is well known how St. Jerome had to suffer even at an age when usually the passions have lost their intensity. The Saint has described the nature, number, and violence of these assaults.

St. Peter Celestine was harassed to such a degree

[1] Alix le Clerc, dite en Religion Mère Thérèse de Jésus.

that he was on the point of deciding not to celebrate Holy Mass any longer, believing himself unworthy to offer the august sacrifice in such a state of soul. In his torture he sought advice of the Sovereign Pontiff. The Pope naturally saw that the trial was a divinely ordained means of purifying, perfecting, and sanctifying the servant of God. He therefore bade Peter take no notice of those assaults, but to continue his Mass every day.

From his biographers we learn that St. Alphonsus Liguori was another sufferer from these humiliating temptations. Père Berthe says: "The impure spirit failed to excite any pride in the Saint, and then tried to tempt his victim to carnal concupiscence, and thus to gain over that angel of innocence who, from childhood to extreme old age, had preserved his baptismal robe unsullied. St. Paul has declared that in the midst of his raptures and revelations a wicked spirit attacked him with shameful temptations. So Alphonsus experienced for a whole year the terrible effects of the power of Satan on the senses and imagination. He said one day to Père Criscuoli: 'I am now eighty-eight, and I feel in myself all the fire of youth.' At times the assaults grew so violent that he broke out into sobbing and weeping, and exclaimed: 'My Jesus, grant that I may die rather than offend Three! O Mary, unless you lend me your aid, I shall become a greater criminal than Judas!' Then he would seek out Fathers Villani and Mazzini. He would drag himself to their rooms, and if neither of these, his confessors, was to be found, he would have recourse to any other priest that was available. When in nights

of sleeplessness he was besieged with the evil temptations, he sent for some priest to come and defend him against the temptations of the Evil Spirit. . . ."

"If one should inquire," continues Père Berthe, "why Our Lord allows His best friends to be weighed down with such torments, the Cross must explain the mystery. It is because the Saints, being living members of Jesus Christ, must undergo in themselves His sorrowful Passion. Humiliations and pains purify them and transfigure them; then God leads them out of the Purgatory in which they had been plunged, darkness gives place to light, their joy exceeds the measure of their affliction, and then we behold an ecstatic Saint, a wonder-worker in him who a short time before seemed to be abandoned by God. This was exactly the case with St. Alphonsus after the severe trial to which he was subjected, and even in the midst of bitter pains, His ecstasies and raptures were more frequent than ever."[1]

There is no need to go further into these matters, or to produce a more detailed account of these miseries. Those that have no experience of such troubles would not understand them any the better, and might probably judge them to be exaggerated or condemn them as scandalous. Whereas what we have adduced already will suffice for those that are concerned to recognize the efficacy of the real remedies.

It matters not what may be the nature or dura-

[1] Cf. *Mémoire sur la Vie et la Congrégation de Saint Alphonse de Liguori*, par le Père Tannoia; *Histoire de Saint Alphonse de Liguori*; *Vie et Institut de Saint Alphonse de Liguori*, par le Cardinal Villecour.

tion of a temptation, it must ever be borne in mind that in temptations against holy purity, as in all others, there is no guilt unless one gives *consent*, *desires*, or forms an act of the *will* to commit the evil that is suggested or to which one is prompted. Moreover, however great the violence of the attack, or the disturbance caused in the soul, or the struggle that has to be maintained, no force can make us commit the evil that we are resolved not to commit; otherwise, we should be forced to deny free-will, the efficacy of grace, and the existence of all supernatural principles. "We do not sin mortally," says Gerson, "whenever bad thoughts come into the mind, but only when we consent to them—that is to say, when the will favours them, when it takes pleasure in treating with them, when it rejoices in their presence. There is no fear of sin as long as they cause displeasure and are held in abomination. In the absence of consent the most filthy imaginings cannot soil the soul any more than the reflection of an ugly monster can diminish the brightness of a mirror. On the contrary, the temptation may enhance the soul's merit. The conscience need only be concerned about the free and intellectual will, which belongs to the superior part of the soul, and which is well able to maintain a horror of the forbidden pleasure even when the grosser appetite of our tainted nature feels its attractions and draws us towards that satisfaction. A scrupulous soul will in such a case imagine that it has given consent, or perhaps consider its lot as an anticipation of hell itself, as it seems to be abandoned by God for its past sins, and is so often on the verge of the abyss of despair."

When a scrupulous and over-anxious person is assailed by strong temptations or carnal suggestions, it will assuredly be hard for him to surmount the *fear* of giving way. But then this very *fear* must serve as a proof of resistance and of refusal to yield, and consequently a proof of the absence of sin, as we have already said.

No one can safely play with fire, and sensuality must be regarded in the same way. They that once give way find themselves enslaved under a yoke of iron. There can be no concession of any kind in this matter.

> " Principiis obsta sero medecina paratur,
> Cum mala per longas invalnere moras."
> OVID, lib. i., *de Rem. am.*, v. 91.

Withstand the beginning; after-remedies come too late when evils have grown strong by long delay.

St. Ignatius, founder of the Society of Jesus, says that Satan is like a serpent which can drag its whole body through an opening that admits the head. St. Pacomius declares that the demons were forced to confess to him that they have great fear of them that resist temptations at once, but they make sport of those that dally with the suggestion; so that the author of the *Imitation* rightly says: " The longer a man is sluggish in resisting, the weaker he daily becomes in himself, and the stronger his enemy becomes against him."[1]

[1] Bk. i., chap. xiii. Those that are subject to many temptations will do well to read and ponder the whole of this chapter. They might also with profit give special attention to the thirteenth chapter of the third part of the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, and the nineteenth chapter of the *Spiritual Combat*.

St. Alphonsus expresses the same truth when treating of the fearful influence of impure temptations on the various faculties and powers. "The flesh is our most terrible enemy. When it attacks us it deprives us of all light; it shuts out of our memory all other considerations and good purposes that we may have formed. Thus blinded, we take no further account of the truths of faith, and we no longer feel any fear of God's punishment. These temptations are favoured by our natural proneness to evil, which carries us strongly into the pleasures of sense. If in such danger we have not recourse to God, then are we lost."[1]

As far as possible, then, we should try and avoid having to enter into the struggle. Unfortunately, this is not always in our power, for we are not of equal force with our enemies. It must never be forgotten that our combat is with most terrible enemies, and all the more dangerous as they never give over their assaults, and are ever on the watch to cause us to fall.

The chief of these enemies are the flesh and the devil. "The flesh," says St. Thomas, "is our domestic enemy, and never ceases to be our enemy." Bossuet says that, in order to keep free of the danger we need to fear "even a look, which is often the inlet whereby the poison enters. The secret of suc-

[1] *Œuvres Complètes*, t. iii., chap. i. "Chastity," he adds, "is a virtue that we have not the strength to practise unless God gives it. And God gives that strength only to them that ask. But whoever asks receives without fail."

St. Thomas says it should never seem impossible to preserve chastity or to fulfil any other Divine precept, since what we cannot do by our own strength we can do with God's help. *Cf.* 1ª, 2ª, *Q.* 109, art. 4 *ad* 2.

cess is to flee. . . . As much as we can, we must avoid having to fight, because we cannot always continue for a long period courageous and firm against ourselves."[1] These words are attributed to St. Augustine: " I have seen the cedars of Lebanon fall, and I could no more have expected such a fall than that of a Jerome or an Ambrose."

In the guidance of those that are subject to grave temptations, regard must be had to the particular circumstances of each individual, his occupation, duties, and relations with persons around him and with others in general. Each of these circumstances may, according to one's position, become an occasion proximate or remote of temptation. It may not be easy—in some cases it is wellnigh impossible—to prescribe a remedy for these. A man cannot imitate the life of St. Pacomius, or St. Anthony or St. Simon Stylites on the pretext of sheltering himself from all dangers.

The difficulty becomes all the greater where nervous patients, besides having regular treatment, are required to abstain from any intellectual work, and to distract the mind as much as possible. The physician or the director has then a special duty to prescribe for them, as, usually speaking, they are not capable of marking out their own line of conduct for themselves. In spite of these difficulties, there are certain general rules which must be regarded if a satisfactory result is hoped for. We give a résumé of these rules here:

The remedies for temptations against chastity can only be expected to work as most remedies do—

[1] *Méditations sur l'Évangile.*

that is, slowly. This will probably try the patience of the afflicted, who would wish to be relieved there and then. Then, if the prescribed remedies do not always bring entire relief, they will at all events indicate the means of increasing their reward by preserving chastity. When it is a question of preserving or regaining a virtue of so high a price, no one should hesitate to impose upon himself the greatest sacrifices.[1]

The indispensable condition, without which others often prove useless, is *calmness*. The afflicted person must recognize the hand of the Divine Master in this humiliating trial, as he does in his bodily sufferings. Never must he forget that God knows the combatants and knows what is the struggle that has to be maintained. He must reflect that no assault can take place without God's permission, and that He assists at every struggle and records every victory.

St. Catherine of Siena, that gentle and illustrious Saint of the Dominican Order, was once assailed by an impure temptation that left her no respite night or day, notwithstanding her constant round of prayer, penance, alms, and labours. After two months of continual struggle our Saviour delivered

[1] "Chastity," says P. Lacordaire, "is not a virtue that belongs to mysticism—to the cloister or to the perfect; it is a moral and social virtue that constitutes a necessity of the human race. Without it life languishes at its source; all beauty perishes, all goodness is driven out of the heart, families are weakened and destroyed; whole nations gradually lose all principle of resistance and expansion, all respect for authority is quenched through scandals; in a word, any and every evil may gain admission where there is a lack of this virtue—every kind of slavery, and every kind of ruin" *op. cit.*, t. iii., p. 63).

her suddenly by appearing to her. "O Lord," she exclaimed, "where wast Thou during all this storm?" And He answered: "In your heart, My daughter, rejoicing to see you combat so valiantly for My sake."

If through imprudence, frailty, seduction, and even passion, one should incur a fall, even then Our Lord is at his side ready to extend a helping hand to raise him up. St. Francis de Sales says: "Occasional lapses into grievous sin are not a proof that no progress has been made in piety, provided that there be no will to persevere in sin and in a continual state of evil. Piety certainly is forfeited by mortal sin, but it is recovered as soon as there is real repentance for the sin. . . . One must never lose courage, but with all humility recognize the weakness, confess it, ask pardon, and invoke assistance from above."[1]

After a fall, then, the penitent has but to seize the Divine Hand, which at all times has blessed the repentant sinner, and listen to the promises of mercy, pardon, consolation, and final victory addressed to him by that Lord Who said of the Magdalen: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much."[2]

Comforted in this way, he can take his place once more in the ranks of the followers of Christ, avoiding all thoughts of discouragement with as much care as he avoids sin and the occasions of it. This is of capital importance, whatever may have been the number or seriousness of the falls. If the remedy is slow in working, we must never doubt that its effect is assured in the long run. Why, then, should

[1] Letter 829, edit. Blaise. [2] Luke vii 47.

we admit the least thought of discouragement when we know that every struggle increases our eternal riches, and that the final combat must end in victory. "He that shall persevere to the end shall be saved."[1]

Again, it must not be supposed that perfection consists in absolute tranquillity and freedom from all temptation, in particular from such humiliating temptations as those against purity—in a word, in absence of all difficulties. Spiritual perfection consists chiefly in the practice of the love of God, as we have already said, then in humility and in the recognition of our nothingness, and in disposition to sacrifice all, even life itself, rather than offend God. Of humility, St. Bernard says: "The sinner who walks by humility has chosen a surer path to follow in the footsteps of the Lamb than the man who with otherwise great purity of life takes the road of pride, for the lowliness of the one will cleanse him from his stains, whilst the pride of the other will soon tarnish his purity."[2]

"I would rather," says St. Francis de Sales, "that any other vices found a place in the cloister than pride and vanity. Because with other vices the sinner can repent and obtain pardon, but the proud soul holds in itself the principles of all vices, and never does penance, because it judges itself to be in security, and despises all good advice. There is nothing to be done with one that is vain and full of self-esteem. He does no good either for himself or for others."[3]

[1] Matt. x. 22. [2] Hom. I. *super* Missus.
[3] *Avis à Madame Rose du Bourgeois. Cf. Vie de St. François de Sales.*

" 'Do you know, My child,' Our Lord said to St. Catherine of Siena—'do you know what you are and what I am? If you learn these two things, you will be happy. You are nothing of yourself, and I am Who am.' "[1]

Whilst we make all our endeavours to resist evil thoughts, we must never fail to have recourse to prayer, to mortification, and to the use of the Sacraments—the only means that will be of avail under some circumstances. "This kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting,"[2] are the words of Our Lord Himself. Napoleon used to say that of the three most necessary things for war, the first was money, the second money, and the third money. We may likewise say, especially for those afflicted persons who are not unable to fast, that to wage war against so dangerous an enemy the first need is prayer, the second prayer, and the third is prayer. We would not thereby suggest that the other means are in any sense without use, but they take a secondary place compared with this.

In our prayers, too, we must have recourse with unbounded and unshaken confidence to her who is strong "as an army in battle array," and whom we invoke as "Mother most pure and Mother most chaste." We cannot but feel that she who has crushed the head of the serpent is still endowed with her high power, and that she will use the same in favour of them that show themselves deserving of her assistance. The great St. Bernard is especially eloquent in his invitation to call upon Our Lady.

[1] Bd. Raymund of Capua, *Life of St. Catharine of Siena.*
[2] Matt. xvii. 20.

" Forget not the example of Mary," he says. " Following her, you cannot go astray; invoking her, you cannot lose hope; thinking of her, you cannot be lost. As long as she sustains you, you cannot fall; as long as she defends you, you can have no fear; as long as she leads you, you cannot grow weary; and as long as she protects you, you are in safety."

In the words of St. Francis de Sales: " The Blessed Virgin has ever been the guiding-star and the port of safety for all men who have to voyage across the sea of this miserable world. . . . All who direct their course by the shining of this heavenly star will surely avoid the rocks and cliffs and sin."[1]

It is through prayer we can most surely obtain a claim upon this protection of Our Lady. It is her own wish that we should make constant use of prayer, and in particular that we should venerate her as " Queen of the Most holy Rosary."

It is related of Brother Alain de la Roche, the Dominican, who was chosen to re-establish and propagate the devotion of the Rosary, that on one occasion he was very nearly falling into a temptation through having neglected his usual invocation of Our Lady. The Blessed Virgin appeared to him and said: " You would not have found yourself in this danger if you had called me at once to your assistance."[2]

As regards the Rosary, it would seem that Our Lady herself invites the faithful to make use of this form of devotion by her different apparitions at La Salette (1646), at Lourdes (1858), and at Pont-

[1] *Œuvres Complètes*, t. ix., 5.
[2] *Cf.* Père Saintrain. *La Science des Saints*, v^e^ partie, chap. ii.

main (1870). It is well known that at Lourdes she instructed Bernardette to go and recite the Rosary fifteen times at the Grotto. It would require whole volumes to recount the wonders effected by means of the Rosary.

Another devotion that cannot be too strongly recommended in times of temptation is that to the Holy Angels, "the friends of chaste souls," and in particular to the Angel Guardian. St. Thomas says that it is a part of the duty of the Angels to enlighten and instruct man in matters that regard his supernatural destiny. But even in the temporal order they may be of assistance, as, for instance, in warding off evil spirits and other dangers that menace soul and body. "If the Angel Guardian," continues the holy Doctor, "sometimes seems to disregard sinful man, he is nevertheless always present, and does not entirely withhold the benefits of his protection. Whilst the angel is in heaven he knows all that happens relative to man, and can bring him help in an instant, since there is no need of time to transport himself from one place to another."[1]

From this teaching of St. Thomas we see that the Angel Guardian watches over his charges with special solicitude, remaining ever by us, or keeping us always in sight. Hence the faithful should often remember this heavenly protector whose name of Guardian has not been given without good reason. If a soul should happen to fall, it must be realized that it was not for want of assistance, but rather through lack of vigilance, trust, and thought of the

[1] P. 1, *Q*. 113, *A*. 617.

friend, faithful, devoted, and powerful, who is ever within call. The soul will meet with disaster when it lends too ready an ear to the deceitful suggestions of another angel—the Angel of Perdition—who, according to Our Lord's words, "is a liar and the father of lies."[1] He, too, remains close to the soul in order to lead it into error, and then to draw it with him into the place reserved for the enemies of God.

If in spite of prayer and penance, of Sacraments and all vigilance, temptations still return with as much force as ever, even then there is no cause for alarm.[2] Our duty is done, and God will not demand more of us. When He judges fit, He can say to the enemy of the soul as He said to the waves: "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther." We must rest content to know this, and to reflect that God always works for the greater good of our souls.

"'The thorn of the flesh," St. Francis de Sales says, "afflicted St. Paul, and tended to induce him to sin. The Apostle felt his affliction as a shame and disgrace; he called it a buffeting, and prayed God to take it from him. But God's answer was: 'O Paul, My grace is sufficient for thee, and My strength can perfect thee in thy weakness.' And with this assurance the great Saint exclaimed: 'Willingly will I glory in my infirmities, that the virtue of Christ Jesus may dwell in me.'"[3]

[1] John viii. 44.

[2] St. Theresa points out that God often allows evil thoughts to beset our minds in such a manner that we cannot get rid of them. Still, she says, we must not be afflicted or troubled on this account. It must suffice for us to know that our will is not in them.

[3] *Treatise of the Love of God*, bk. xi., chap. vii.

It must never be forgotten that the flesh never ceases to be a source of danger, even when it has been subjected to the Spirit. Consequently, it must always be treated with suspicion, and never allowed any respite, for this enemy of ours only awaits a favourable opportunity to seize upon the arms which it has been constrained to lay aside. "Who is the man," asks St. Leo, "who, however great his piety, can feel assured of his salvation, and beyond all danger from the allurements of sense, seeing that he must ever bear about with him this mortal flesh? Even though Divine grace daily enables the Saints to carry off glorious victories over their lower impulses, still it does not relieve them of the origin of their combat."[1]

So with reason St. Pacomius said: "Every day the soul should confer with the body, and say to it: 'O body, as long as we are united, and must make together this journey which is to end in an eternity of joy or sorrow, obey my guidance and follow the directions of reason. Rise not in revolt against me, but together let us joyfully serve the Lord our God. Let us valiantly resist every assault of our enemies. Let us labour courageously, and set before ourselves the reward that is laid up for us, so that, after having toiled for a little while, we may pass together to that kingdom where we shall possess unspeakable joys and a never-ending happiness.'"[2]

[1] *Serm. I., de jejun, Pentecost.*

[2] Quoted by Saint-Jure, S.J. Père Sénault expresses these ideas thus: "Soul and body are very closely bound together, and yet they are constantly at variance; they are enemies that never leave one another, and friends that can never agree" (*Cloyseault*, ii.).

All that we have said hitherto tends to show on the one hand the importance of the virtue of purity—the virtue that renders us like to the angels—and on the other the great difficulties that must be encountered in its practice. Whilst realizing these aspects of the virtue, we must beware of supposing that herein we have "all the law and the Prophets."[1] It is not to be imagined that when conscience reproves us with nothing on this head that therefore we have attained perfection. There are numerous other duties pertaining to God and the neighbour that are of no less importance. This is the sixth Commandment, and neither the first nor the second. In no way does it come first in God's law, either in order or by reason of the special sanction which this command has received. Hence St. Gregory says with reason: "Whilst there are no good works without chastity, chastity is not an eminent virtue unless it be accompanied with good works."[2] According to a French Jesuit, "mortification of the flesh, considered in itself, is not reckoned amongst the noblest of virtues. Still, its excellence is shown by the fact that it is practised by all the Saints and really

[1] Matt. xxii. 40. It will be obvious that we are speaking here of sins of frailty and not of serious infractions of the sacred laws of marriages or of crimes of this nature which call down God's malediction both on individuals and on society at large. It is ignorance alone that can excuse the breach of such laws—if ever they can be excusable. And it would be hard to maintain that such ignorance could be inculpable. "When Scipio was chaste," says P. Lacordaire, "Rome destroyed Carthage; when Rome was corrupt, Cæsar reigned" (*op. cit.*, t. vi., p. 350). *Cf.* Gen. xxxviii. 9, 10; Tob. vi. 17, 22; Ps. cxxvii.; 1 Tim. ii. 15; 1 Pet. iii. 7; Jean du Valdor, *Les Signes de la fin d'un Monde :* Paris, Vic et Amat.

[2] *Hom. XIII. in Evang.*

spiritual men. The reason of its greatness is that mortification proceeds not only from the virtue of penance—its natural source—but from several other virtues as well, each one of which contributes its special beauty and lustre, and thereby raises mortification to a high degree of perfection."[1]

Whatever may be the number and gravity of falls, great care must be taken not to give way to false shame, to laxity, and to a disregard of the Sacraments; otherwise the state of a soul would indeed become serious, and would deserve to incur the severities of Divine justice. St. John Chrysostom says: "The chief danger consists, not so much in falling when fighting, as in remaining upon the ground after the fall."[2]

The great remedy is to have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance on each occasion without ever growing weary or discouraged by this exercise. In the Lives of the Fathers of the desert we read of a solitary who was subject to daily falls, and who went to make his confession each time. His Spiritual Father heard his confession, and imposed a penance upon him each time. At last, no doubt wearied by these constant relapses, and finding no remedy, the unfortunate hermit asked his confessor: "Father, how long must I go on confessing these faults, seeing that I break down so regularly?" And the other answered: "Until it shall please God to take you out of this life. It rests with Him to call you away when He wills; therefore do what lies in your power to gain His mercy and to move Him to grant

[1] Père Saint-Jure, S.J., *De la Connaissance et de l'Amour de Dieu*, t. iv., lib. iii., chap xxi.

[2] *Ad Theod. laps.*, i.

that you may be reconciled with Him before you die."

Most scrupulous persons allow themselves to be tormented with anxieties as to the past, present, and future, and are always apprehensive that some evil is about to come upon them. They forget the words of the Gospel: "Be not therefore solicitous for to-morrow, for the morrow shall be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."[1] St. Francis de Sales says: "We may not feel in ourselves any strength or courage whatever to face a temptation if it were to come to us now, but we can nevertheless desire to resist if the trial should come, and we can hope that God will aid us when we ask for aid. In these dispositions we ought not to give way to anxious fears, for it is not necessary that we should feel a reserve of strength and courage, so long as we hope and desire to find it when the need comes. Neither is it at all needful to seek a sign or proof within ourselves that we shall be able to resist; it is enough to be conscious of the hope that God will help us."[2]

Finally, it must be repeated that whatever happens, those that are afflicted with the sore trial of heavy temptation must never allow themselves to be overcome by fears and apprehensions. These often tend to increase weakness and to destroy the little courage that may be left. They must learn to accept the cross, how humiliating soever it may be

[1] Matt. vi. 34.

[2] Letter 875. It would seem that the excessive fear of sinning explains the use of evil words and even actions in certain hysterical attacks. These outbursts are no indication of a bad disposition in the patients.

felt, for it will make them the more pleasing to the Divine Master if it be borne with faith, resignation, and constancy. At every suggestion of discouragement they must turn their eyes towards Him Who "humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross,"[1] and Who alone can keep them in the right road or, if necessary, lead them back. This He promises to do in these words:

"Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation. Humble thy heart and endure: incline thy ear, and receive the words of understanding: and make not haste in the time of clouds.

"Wait on God with patience, join thyself to God, and endure, that thy life may be increased in the latter end. Take all that shall be brought upon thee, and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience. For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation."[2]

[1] Phil. ii. 8. [2] Ecclus. ii. 1-5.

CHAPTER V

ON DIFFICULTIES IN PRAYER

DISTRACTION and dryness in time of prayer should never be a matter of surprise nor be treated as of great importance, for they are the natural outcome of our weakness. The Saints themselves have been by no means exempt from these troubles, notwithstanding their lifelong penance, sacrifices, and constant union with God. Some have borne the difficulty throughout the whole course of their lives.

Distractions may first be considered as arising from the permission of God, Who thereby wishes to try our fidelity to His service, fortify our virtue, and increase our merit. Or they may arise from the action of Satan, whose interest it is to render us distracted, because numerous distractions soon cause fatigue, weariness, and disgust, and this is just what the seducer aims at. But even in this case there is no need for alarm. Another source of troubles in prayer may be our own ignorance of how to set about prayer and meditation, our lack of mortification, of recollection, and real spirituality.

Or again, more external and remote causes produce our distractions. We find such pleasure in treating with persons or things that should be a matter of indifference to us that the remembrance

of these pursues us everywhere and prevents us from recollecting ourselves and fixing full attention on our higher interests. Only too often the poor human heart is so full of creatures that there is no room left for the Creator. "With desolation is all the land made desolate; because there is none that considereth in the heart."[1] Should a person find that this applies to his case, he must consider that he is so far responsible for his distractions and is bound to adopt suitable means to lessen them; and to succeed, when once we realize the value of prayer, we must resolutely cut off the sources of these distractions, and that with the same energy with which we would deal with a dangerous temptation. Whoever really desires the end desires also the means to attain it.

From many points of view we must pass the same judgment on distractions as on temptations in general. In so far as they are *involuntary* and not *consented to*, they can in nowise spoil our prayer or render it less pleasing to God. They do not, then, affect the *intention* with which we began, whatever be the nature or duration of the distraction.

Our safeguard is to beware of willingly fixing our minds upon the intruding thoughts and taking any wilful satisfaction in them.

When grace and charity exist in a soul they exert a wide, though sweet, influence on all objectively good acts that relate to God, even though there be no explicit direction or renewal of the general good *intention* before each action.

Billuart says: "All acts of virtue in a just man

[1] Jer. xii. 11.

arise from the influence of charity: for it is not only at the moment of justification, as some maintain, that man exercises and is bound to exercise an act of charity, but he does so frequently, as St. Thomas teaches in these words: 'When a man makes God his end, the intention of the final end, which is God, remains virtually in all that man does for God.'"[1]

What, then, must be our *intention* at prayer? First, a continuous *virtual* intention—that is to say, the general intention, once formed, offering all our actions to God, suffices to influence our prayer, provided that it be not revoked by any contrary express act of the will.

"*Actual* charity," says Billuart, "is not of necessity. That *virtual charity* which exists in every just soul in force of oft repeated acts of charity, is sufficient to fulfil a man's obligations to practise charity, without which he would cease to be just." According to St. Thomas: "In order to direct our actions to their final end, it is not required that the *actual intention* should always be applied to an act directed to its proximate end. It is enough if all these particular purposes or ends be actually referred to their final end from time to time—as, for example, occurs when a person thinks of giving himself totally to the love of God, because then all that refers to oneself is referred finally to God."[2]

To make this clearer, we may take a simple and practical example. Let us take the case of a person who is in a state of grace and whose bodily health is

[1] St. Thomas, *Q.* 2, *de Virtutibus*, *A.* 11 *ad* 2ⁿ. *Cf.* Billuart, *Summa Theologica*, t. iii., dissert. 8 *ad* 4.
[2] *Loc. cit.*

such that he always sits down to his meals with a good appetite. He goes to table and does full justice to his dinner, and perhaps enjoys a walk afterwards. His repast and walk, provided that they be not vitiated by any inordinate pleasure, may be meritorious in the sight of God, even though there were no express renewal of a *good intention* before commencing them. We will suppose that this person has recently approached the Sacraments, heard Mass, or within the course of a few days or weeks at most he has elicited some act of the love of God. These acts implicitly include that *good intention* to do all for the love of God, and their influence continues to render all subsequent acts meritorious in God's sight. Thus it is sufficient for this effect to offer one's actions to God from time to time.

According to Gury, "this effect is obtained by making acts of charity consisting in joy at the thought of the Divine perfections; in desires that none may offend God, that all may love Him and keep His Commandments; in prayers that God's name may be sanctified, that His will may be done, in every wish to avoid sin because it is displeasing to Him."[1]

St. Thomas says again: "Prayer has for its cause desire inspired by charity, and it is from this desire that prayer should arise. It should exist in our souls always either *actually* or *virtually ;* for the value of such desires extends to all that we do by charity" (1 Cor. x.).[2]

[1] *Cf. Compendium Theol. Mor. de Virtute*, cap. iii., *A*. 1, 219.
[2] 2. 2, *Q*. 83, *A*. 14.

The *actual intention* is that which is formed at the time that we accomplish an act. But as we have said, it is not always necessary. It is obvious that it would require an application of mind beyond the powers of ordinary individuals, and therefore it cannot be required, especially of those who are afflicted, and more especially still of those who suffer from any nervous malady. St. Thomas teaches that "when one tends towards some good, or is actually attaining it, there is no need for him to be always thinking of the final end of that good, even as he who is walking has no need to recall the term of his journey at every step he takes."[1] What would be thought of the pilgrim who should repeat at every step of his way, "I am going to Rome"? So it would be unreasonable to demand the *actual intention* for the carrying out of each one of our actions.

At the same time, whilst the doctrine of St. Thomas is so natural, simple, and consoling, it must not be inferred that it is not good and useful to renew the *good intention* now and again, and, as St. Alphonsus Liguori recommends, to offer to God, especially in the morning, all the actions and sufferings of the day.

"There are two fruits to be gathered from prayer," St. Thomas says. "There is the merit of the act and the consolation united with the devotion which arises from it. As far as the spiritual devotion is concerned, it is not obtained if a person does not fix his attention upon his prayers or does not understand them. But merit is not even then absent, otherwise we should have to judge that very many prayers go without any merit since it is hardly

[1] 1. 2, *Q.* 1, *A.* 6, *ad* 3^m^.

possible to recite even one *Our Father* without finding the attention drawn off by other thoughts. The first motive that gives rise to the action persists throughout even though the mind be distracted in the details of carrying out the action. And that first motive renders the entire action meritorious unless it be broken off by some contrary affection which shuts out the first end proposed in order to establish a conflicting one in its place. And if during prayer a person is distracted from the words that are being uttered, or if, in the execution of some meritorious action, the mind does not dwell continually upon the intention of working for God's sake, still there is no loss of reward. And the reason is because it is not necessary that the intention of the agent be applied to the particular end of each separate action that contributes to meritorious work directed to a good end."[1]

Distractions are natural to our state, like so many other difficulties that are encountered in the exercises of piety. We are human beings, and not angels, and our imagination is ever liable to call up images which the will does not approve of. Consequently, as St Francis de Sales says, we must not give way to impatience because our nature is human and not angelic.[2] Often enough, too, we shall find our distractions increase just in proportion to the efforts we make to remove and avoid them. And this is why some persons subject themselves to tiring, useless, and even harmful repetitions; whereas those that are easily disquieted in mind over these things never should repeat even their

[1] *Expos. in* 1 Cor. xiv., Lect. 3.
[2] St. Francis de Sales, Letter 428.

prayers of obligation—as, for example, the Sacramental penance.[1]

"Though a distraction should return to you a hundred times," says Dom Le Masson, "be no more troubled at it the hundredth than the first time. As soon as you are aware of it, only bring your mind back quietly to the presence of God, as though nothing had occurred, and make no reflection whatever on the matter of the distraction. When flies bite, we usually only brush them away with the hand without troubling to run after them to kill them; when they return we only do the same thing again. We must treat distractions in a similar manner; to follow them up with our thoughts would only be waste of time. Hence we must not stop to reproach ourselves, nor delay to express to ourselves our regrets (which are often no more than the result of internal impatience), nor yet seek considerations which we imagine may stifle the troublesome thoughts and prevent them from coming back to us. All this would only be running after flies. Let us leave them to fly away, whilst we pass on and take no notice of them."[2]

[1] In some serious cases it is necessary to obtain a dispensation from the obligatory prayers for the patient, as it is the only means of setting the mind at rest and perhaps preserving their sanity. The writer knew a religious who had reached such a state of mental trouble about his prayers that he spent most of his time repeating his office again and again. The only respite for him was either when he was asleep or when he could find a fellow religious to recite his breviary with him. There was no remedy for him until a dispensation was procured, and this brought the assurance that he committed no fault if it was imperfectly said or omitted altogether.

[2] *Introduction à la Vie Intérieure et Parfaite*. De l'oraison intérieure.

As we have seen from St. Thomas, persons in a perfectly normal state are unable to proceed far in prayer without distractions; therefore much less is to be expected of those who are not blessed with so evenly balanced a constitution. The learned Gerson tells this story: A certain peasant, when boasting of his gift of devotion to his prayers, asserted that he was able to recite them without any distraction whatever. A more spiritual and experienced man undertook to undeceive him and to prove to him the frailty and the inconstancy of the human mind. He promised the peasant the gift of a donkey if he would recite only the *Our Father* with sustained attention and without any distraction. The good man was quite ready to enter into the bargain in which he had nothing to lose, and tried to recollect himself to recite the prayer. Before he had got half-way through the *Pater* he found himself wondering whether he should get a saddle with the beast. . . . He had the honesty to acknowledge his failure, and the experience made him realize that it is no easy matter to hold the attention for any length of time on one subject without the intrusion of some other—so weak and inconstant are we.

We have already said even the Saints are not free from afflictions of this kind. St. Jerome acknowledges how distracted he often was and how tormented he often felt in consequence. He relates how his imagination would carry him away from his prayers into the very thick of the world's seductions.[1]

St. Gregory says that in prayer heaven and hell

[1] *Dialog. contra Lucif.*

enter into combat, and the soul that gives itself up to the contemplation of heavenly things often finds itself confronted with the intruded image of some vile and hateful object.

St. Bernard, too, lamented that he was set upon by horrible temptations whenever he would engage in recollection and prayer.[1]

Finally we may recall how St. Theresa describes the fearful assaults of the demon especially at that period of her life in which her chief delight was in her prayer. She says: "The devil used suddenly to fill my mind with such frivolous ideas, that at any other but prayer-time I could not have helped laughing at them. It seems as though the enemy becomes master of the soul at such times, so as to have power to fill the mind with such a host of trivialities that there is no room left for anything useful. To give some idea of the torment that this was to me, I can only say that Satan made sport of me as though I was like a plaything in his hands. No one can really express what was to be endured in this state. The soul constantly seeks for help, and God does not send it. There seems to be nothing left but the light of reason, and even that appears in some sense blindfolded. In these difficulties one can only walk as a person passing through dangerous ways in the night-time, and only avoiding the pitfalls through having known them so thoroughly in the daylight. In a similar way, if the soul does not meet with disaster, it is only on account of the good habit it has formed of shunning the evil at more favourable times, together with that particular

[1] *Traité de la Maison Intérieure*, chap. xlix.

help which God gives in the midst of spiritual darkness."

The Saint was at times unable to keep her attention fixed for the space of a *Credo*, and felt "like a beast of burden," insensible to good or evil. "I sometimes wonder," she writes, "what would those persons who have a good opinion of me think of me, if only they could see me in such confusion of mind."

These periods of aridity continued for twenty-two years, but never discouraged this great Saint nor lessened in any way her faith and exactitude in the service of God.[1]

Many pious persons form an entirely wrong idea of prayer, Holy Communion, and other spiritual practices, by seeking chiefly in them consolations and spiritual sweetness. They regard these as the chief fruit of prayer. Then they judge of the progress they make and the degree of perfection attained by the sweetness they experience, never suspecting that they are merely seeking to satisfy self-love.

St. John of the Cross writes on this subject: "The unrestrained desire to experience spiritual consolation is the cause of a number of faults of impatience and anger. When some persons are deprived of the pleasure they have been accustomed to experience in their spiritual exercises, they are very easily dejected. Then they become disagreeable in their relations with their neighbour, discontented with themselves, and resentful on the smallest provocation. And all this will happen just after they have spent some little time in recollection and prayer. . . .

[1] *Cf. Vie de Sainte Thérèse, écrite par elle-même,* chap. xxx. Paris. V. Lecoffre.

When they receive Holy Communion, they make great efforts to obtain sensible pleasure instead of applying themselves to the duty of adoring and praising the Lord Who is present to the soul. So full are they of the idea that the fruit of Communion consists of that sweetness and consolation, that when they find this lacking they suppose they have done no good towards their soul's welfare. . . . God often withholds that sensible feeling precisely in order to induce the communicant to turn to Him simply with the eyes of faith. . . . These misguided souls want to feel God and taste His sweetness in this way in all their exercises of devotion. And the same applies to their prayer. Convinced that prayer is advantageous only when it floods the heart with torrents of consolations, they exert themselves to obtain these, as it were, by main force. The result is that they weary and exhaust themselves to no purpose. They fail in their object, are disappointed and believe they have wasted their time, and eventually they may abandon the practice of prayer altogether. In any case the constant longing for the pleasures of prayer must destroy all real devotion which consists in perseverance, in the exercise of patience, humility, and self-distrust, simply with the object of pleasing God. Without this end in view, one must soon become slow and tepid in the Way of the Cross, and suffer keenly from the bitterness of renunciation and self-denial. The solid and mortified spirit follows a very different road, going towards God through self-denial, fear, and lowly submission to the Divine Will in all things. We must ever bear in mind that perfection and the true

worth of good deeds is not to be found in the number of acts performed, but in the degree of conformity to God's good pleasure."[1]

The celebrated Dominican, Tauler, answered some persons who complained to him of spiritual aridity: "Bear it with patience, and you will gain many more benefits than if you were continually filled with movements of tender and fervent devotion."

It is related that Our Lord once said to St. Gertrude: "I would that all my chosen ones understood well that all their exercises of piety and all their good deeds are most acceptable to Me when they serve Me at some cost to themselves. And those minister to Me in this way, who without feeling the slightest taste of devotion, still continue as best they can their prayer and pious deeds, trusting only to My bounty and love. On the other hand, if they that continually look for sensible joy and consolation obtained what they desire, they would suffer a serious loss of their merits and would reap but little benefit for their souls."

St. Francis de Sales writes: "As we can neither make it rain nor cease raining at will, so neither is it in our power to weep with devotion or overcome the movement to tears as we should like. This is not our fault, but the result of God's Providence which ordains that we must journey on over land and desert, and not by sea, and wills that we accustom ourselves to labour and pain."[2]

He writes, again, to a lady: "Give up all distress-

[1] *The Dark Night of the Soul*, lib. i., chaps. v. and vi.
[2] Letter 626.

ing cares, and never say that you do no good in your prayer-time. What would you wish to do more than you actually perform—namely, to represent to God again and again your nothingness and misery? The most convincing appeal of the beggar is to show his ills and necessities. But, you tell me, often you cannot even do this, but you only remain like a statue in God's presence. Well, even that is something. In the palaces of kings and princes, statues are set about merely to cause pleasure by their appearance. Do you content yourself with serving a similar purpose in God's presence. He will give life to the statue when it pleases Him. The trees only produce their fruit under the influence of the sun: some early, some late; some every year, and others, perhaps, less often or not in equal quantity. We are very fortunate to be able to stay in God's presence, and there we must be content to bear our fruit early or late, every day or less often, according to His good pleasure, to which we must ever resign ourselves entirely.

"This is the great lesson for us. We must see what God wills, and, recognizing it, we must endeavour to carry it out cheerfully, or at least courageously. And further, we must try and love that will of God and also the obligation which it creates for us—even though it were that we spend our lives in tending cattle or performing other most abject duties. It should be all the same to us wherever God may place us. This is the height of perfection at which we should always aim, and the one that comes nearest to this practice is the one that shall carry off the prize."[1]

[1] Letter 669.

"O God," exclaims St. Jane Frances de Chantal, "what a happiness it is for a soul to have no other support in desolation and affliction, but that which love and simple faith supply in God! Our sovereign good is His Holy Will. Let it come to us by ways of fear or of hope, as it shall be pleasing to Him; it shall be all the same to us. For in every case we must only seek His good pleasure without troubling ourselves to notice by what manner of road He leads us."

At the same time, it must be understood that spiritual consolations are not forbidden. They may be wished for especially at the commencement of a life of piety. They give us courage and help us to unite ourselves more speedily and more completely to God, and thus assist us in the practice of virtue. But in praying for such consolations, we must do so in a spirit of deep humility and submission to the Divine Will. God will not withhold them if they are either useful or needful for our spiritual advancement. Consolations, says Boudon, are like the sweet things that are given to children to induce them to eat food which older persons are able to eat without such assistance.

Bossuet says: "Piety that is weak needs some sensible sweetness. It would seem that God wishes first to gain the senses and the exterior of the soul before entering within. This is the explanation of spiritual sweetness and consolations wherein pious tears are sometimes shed that are sweeter than any joy, because they are the result of a holy expansion of a heart that opens out to God with rapture as pure as it is inexplicable. This chaste joy, the sup-

port of new-born piety, cannot be regarded as anything but a gift of God. Nature may indeed enter into these sentiments to spoil them, but then it is no longer the support of piety, but merely the food of self-love in such a way as it is not our purpose to explain here. It suffices to have established the fact that these sensible consolations experienced in the first stages of piety have their source in Divine grace."[1]

It is important to realize that in the spiritual life it matters but little whether we be deprived of consolations, and besieged with temptations and troubles, or whether we be favoured with consolations. Seeing that either state must quickly pass, it would be fruitless to allow ourselves to be disturbed. The real object of prayer consists in giving ourselves entirely to God. In labour as in repose, in tears as in joy, in sickness as in health, on Calvary as on Thabor, we must desire, seek, and esteem only the good pleasure of the Divine Master without considering our own. All these various states of feeling are transitory, as are all the things of this world. They are but as imperceptible points in this short and uncertain life, but points that make up the line which leads us and attaches us to the state that knows no change—the life of union and love in the Author of all good. We must try to surrender our own interests and resign ourselves to God. He will be witness of our good will, and will reward it as and when He judges best; for we may rest assured that nothing will pass unperceived by

[1] *Préface sur l'Instruction Pastorale donnée à Cambrai le* 15 *Septembre*, 1697.

the all-just Judge. "We ought," says the saintly Bishop of Geneva, "to find happiness enough in considering that God is our God, and we are but feeble creatures unworthy the honour of belonging to Him, as did St. Francis of Assisi, who could spend the whole night exclaiming, 'Who art Thou, O God, and who am I?'"

Considerations of this kind should banish all feelings of discouragement. We might recall the examples of the Saints who not only had to bear trials of the kind we have been treating of, but were at the same time victims of the most humiliating temptations. We who are sinners and only beginners in the spiritual life cannot therefore expect raptures and ecstasies.

"As long as your heart does not wish for distractions," says Boudon, "you need not worry. Looking into the depth of your soul God sees that you go to your prayer for love of Him. A host of involuntary distractions will not do away with this *intention*, though they may persist throughout the whole course of your prayer. On the contrary, the pain they cause you, if bravely borne, will be more efficacious in uniting you to the Divine Goodness than much sweetness and pleasure."[1]

If all these considerations, borrowed from acknowledged masters of the spiritual life, are still insufficient to reassure souls in trouble who, for the rest, are often incapable of following out any clear line of reasoning, then we may offer them one other piece of advice: Let them ask themselves this question as each distraction troubles them: Have I

[1] *Op. cit.*

come to my prayer with the wish and intention of having these thoughts in my mind? Or, were these the object with which I began my prayer?

And if they only perceive that they have been distracted when the prayer-time is over, they might ask themselves: "Before beginning my prayer, did I ask God to send me these distracting thoughts?" The answer is a very simple one. In this way they should make a brief protest against these troubling thoughts, humble themselves before God, and then make a firm resolution to repel the slightest remembrance of these distractions, with the same care that they would resist suggestions against faith, or any other dangerous temptation. They must shake them off as they would a spark of fire from their clothes. To do otherwise is but to open the door to fresh troubles, and to render it impossible to cultivate a life of piety and spirituality.

PART III

CHAPTER I

ON THE CHOICE OF A CONFESSOR

IT is not necessary to be far advanced in theology, asceticism, or in the practice of virtue, in order to grasp the importance of discretion in the choice of a confessor.[1] The slightest knowledge of human nature and its relation to this world and the supernatural life is sufficient to make one appreciate the seriousness of the confessor's position. We are all only travellers making our way towards our home in heaven by ways that are often winding, rough, and perilous. How is it to be expected that, inexperienced as we are, we can reach the end of our journey in safety without the help of a guide "endowed with charity, knowledge, and prudence"[2]? So it is with reason that St. Gregory has called spiritual direction the "ars artium," and that St. Francis de Sales, himself an admirable director of souls, says that a confessor should be one chosen "out of a thousand, or rather out of ten thousand," if "one wishes to travel with security in the way of

[1] No distinction is here drawn between the office of Confessor and Director.

[2] St. François de Sales, *Introd. à la vie dévote*, I^re^ partie, chap. iv.

a devout life." According to this Saint, so important is this point that it is the first advice to be given. Other Saints and masters of the spiritual life have expressed themselves in a similar manner whenever they have had to treat of this question. Père Grou says: "It is necessary to have a director because it would be the greatest possible mistake to wish to guide oneself, and the greatest illusion to suppose that one can guide oneself. The most able and most intelligent person is blind as to his own interior conduct. He may be a saint, and quite capable of directing others, but he will not be able to act as a guide to himself; it would be presumption on his part to imagine that he could. The very first thing that God demands of one aspiring to holiness is that he renounce his own judgment, humble himself, and submit to the guidance of those to whom God entrusts the guidance of souls."

St. Vincent Ferrer,[1] in his *Treatise on the Spiritual Life*, speaks thus: "It must be understood that he who allows a director to guide him, and obeys the director in all his actions, small as well as great, will reach perfection much more speedily than the person who wishes to proceed in his own way—even though he be endowed with an exceptional degree of intelligence, and possess books which clearly set forth the nature of all the virtues and the means to acquire them. I go further, and say that Our Lord, without Whom we can do nothing, will never bestow graces upon the soul that neglects the powerful aid of a capable director, judging itself able to seek and

[1] The well-known wonder-worker and preacher of the Order of St. Dominic (1357-1419).

find all things useful for salvation by its own personal efforts."

Perhaps we may be told that St. Vincent Ferrer was here speaking chiefly, if not exclusively, for souls that are called to aim at perfection and holiness. But are not all called to this by the Master, Who says: "Be ye perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect"[1]? We all know that this command comes to all, and not merely to religious. What is the reason of our being in the world at all if we do not tend towards a higher state of holiness, and if we fail to make use of the means which God has provided to reach it? The twofold object that gives value to life is the glory of God and the interest of our souls, so that we cannot live profitably without an interest in these. Indeed, it is precisely because we forget these that we transgress so often; it is because we render ourselves unworthy of holiness that we lose even the true appreciation of it.

"Be not frightened at the word *holiness*," says St. Bernard. "Holy Scripture applies the name of Saints not only to those who have acquired perfect sanctity, but also to such as are striving to attain it; not only to those who have already entirely purified their hearts, but to them also who ardently aspire to this state of purity." The Apostle himself says: "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend."[2] Even he had not reached the goal. But he was disposing himself ever to greater holiness, and by that means attained to his high estate. Do you also resolve to become a saint at all costs,

[1] Matt. v. 48. [2] Phil. iii. 12.

and begrudge no time that is given to the work. Having once formed the resolution, continue as you have begun, and fail not each day to press forward. And if your fidelity should be tried; if you should happen to fail—for you are human, and therefore always weak—raise yourself promptly, and set forth once again with your good desires and aspirations to become a saint. Thus you will surely fulfil your design."[1]

This is a subject which, of its own nature, presents many difficulties. But the difficulties increase in seriousness and in complexity when we come to apply it to souls laden with the heavy cross of nervous affliction; the more so as they are so often misunderstood by those whose mission it is to console, encourage, comfort, and guide them in that painful way of their Calvary into which the Divine Master has called them.

Medical men, often worthy of great consideration for their knowledge, not infrequently fail to understand the physiological or psychological state of nervous patients. Hence it is not surprising that priests also should be mistaken, and that the patients should find themselves painfully deceived when they had made sure of finding a devoted friend and a sure guide in them after having searched elsewhere for so long.

God tries souls in the manner and for the time that

[1] Père A. M. Weiss, Dominicain, *Sagesse Pratique*, chap. xiv., Lyon: Nouvellet.—"One perfect soul," says St. Alphonsus Liguori, "is more pleasing to God than a thousand imperfect ones. Consequently, when a confessor meets with a penitent free from grievous faults, he should spare no pains to introduce that one to a life of perfection and of Divine love."

He pleases. He it is Who permits the sufferer to be misunderstood, or does not provide a choice of confessors. But in such cases He does not forbid the penitent to have recourse with great confidence to Him Who alone has it in his power to remove or lessen the trial. " Since," says St. Francis de Sales, " it is so important a matter to have a good guide in the paths of piety, pray God with deep fervour to send you one according to His own Heart, and doubt not that He will hear you. He will send you a trustworthy guide, even though it must be one of His angels, as in the case of the young Tobias. Indeed, in any case, your guide must be an angel for you. When once you have found him, do not regard him any longer as a man; do not trust merely to his human knowledge. But consider your trust given to God, Who will lead and instruct you through his ministry by placing in his heart and on his lips the sentiments and words that will be needed to help you. Listen to him as an angel come down from heaven to direct you."

It is certain that the choice of a confessor is not an easy matter. But when the assistance of a director is necessary, with God's help a suitable one is always found."

" In order to discover such a confessor," says Fénelon, " we should find out what is the common estimate of a priest as a confessor, without, however, looking out for those who are, as it were, in fashion, or we should be applying the standards of the world and of vanity to the most serious matters of religion. Again, a director must not be chosen merely because he is agreeable, or because we are sensibly attracted

to him, but for the sole reason that we regard him as a man of God. A choice made from human motives may ruin all the interests of salvation. It is well to look for perfection in a director of souls. But since we cannot judge of the inmost recess of the soul, we must be satisfied with the chief exterior marks of a competent director, such as detachment and retirement from the world, kindness and openness of character, abstention from frivolous amusement and personal ease, a moderate firmness without harshness, experience of prayer and of the interior life, and finally, discretion in offering the necessary aid to the persons he has to guide without indulging in useless conversations."

Such qualities are needed to exercise with profit the ministry of spiritual direction amongst the ordinary faithful, and amongst persons of normal disposition. Some addition must be made to all these when the confessor has to deal with those that are afflicted with doubts and scruples—the symptoms of the maladies of which we are treating. Boudon writes: " One can scarcely say too much of the need of an experienced director in these cases. Confessors who think they can be guided only by theoretical knowledge may rather cause a great deal of harm. Besides the general understanding which moral science teaches of the difference between thought and consent, the confessor needs the faculty to enter into the state of mind of the penitent who seeks advice. And he must judge this not merely from what he learns from the person (who usually describes things in a very different light from that in which he has performed them), but also from a

mature experience of these cases. The confessor must have discernment to be able to forestall these troubled souls in their explanations, to discover what they are unable to express, and to say for them what they are not able to say themselves. He must be able to gauge the nature of their interior operations, in which they are themselves blind; he must be able to throw light on their obscurities, reassure them in their fears, and keep them steadfast when they are full of doubts and fears. Finally, the director must possess a high degree of charity to bear graciously with scruples that appear absurd, groundless, and unreasonable."[1]

It may perhaps be objected that this advice of ours is not practical, because so many are not in a position to follow it out. We answer: Firstly, Saints and ascetic writers—many more than we have named here—must have foreseen this objection, too, and yet they insist strongly upon the choice of a confessor. Secondly, it must be admitted that the greater number of patients of whom we write are in towns where ordinarily there is some choice to be made. Thirdly, our advice is naturally only given to those who find it possible to make a choice of a director. No one can be obliged to what is impossible. Where there is no choice we must believe that God will supply and bestow upon the confessor the discernment and other qualities that his ministry will demand. Or it may be that the penitent will be required by God to embrace this further cross of feeling himself misunderstood, neglected, or harshly treated by the confessor, as we read of

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 155.

so many Saints whom God has called to perfection through ways of extraordinary difficulty. In any case, God in His goodness will watch over His servants. It is of importance that the soul thus tried should not allow itself to be disquieted. Painful as the trial may be, it cannot but be of immense benefit if only the soul knows how to profit by it. And God will remove this hardship when it no longer enters into His wise plans and no longer avails for the spiritual welfare of the soul.

St. Theresa was well acquainted with these trials. This she tells us: "When I used to go to my confessors, this is what often happened: Though they were men of real sanctity, they used to receive me with such harsh words and reprimands that when, in after years, I reminded them, they themselves were astonished at what they had said. They have assured me that in spite of their good intentions of receiving me with kindness, they could not help treating me as they did. Very often they were moved to pity at the sufferings of mind and body which I had to undergo. They felt some scruple, too, at having spoken to me so harshly, and made up their minds to try and console me; but they found that this was out of their power. There was nothing that could offend God in what they said to me, but their words were most painful and distasteful coming from the confessor. Without doubt, their idea was to humble me."[1]

[1] *Vie de Sainte Thérèse, écrite par elle-même*, chap. xxx.

On the Conduct of Penitents towards their Director.

From all that precedes it is easy to judge that efficient directors are not easily found. On the other hand, it may be said that it is rare also that we find those that have to be directed—whether in good health or nervously affected—who will readily place themselves as spiritual children under their director. Whilst they have a right to look for certain qualities in their spiritual guide, they must also bear in mind that they, on their part, must also cultivate certain qualities in order to attain the object at which they aim.

If spiritual direction is to be profitable and produce fruit, it must be based exclusively on *supernatural ideas* in both the director and the penitent. Mere human considerations, views that are purely natural or worldly—whether in the choice of a director or in after dealings with him—can only lead to human, natural, and worldly results, devoid of all profit for the interior life. When the direction is wholly supernatural, aiming only at God's glory and the soul's welfare and holiness, it will speedily produce sure and edifying results.

To achieve these results, it is necessary to keep to the following rules, which summarize the qualities that should be maintained in the holy relationship of director and penitent.

" The first rule is not to meet except when there is need, and then to discourse only on matters relating to God. The second is to preserve a mutual respect, and never to abandon a mutual

attitude of decorum and gravity, remembering always that it is God's interests that are being treated, and that therefore He is present in these meetings.

"The third rule is to hide nothing from the director, under any pretext whatsoever—not even thoughts or suspicions against him. In proportion as the director is able to advance the work of God, the soul may be tempted against him at the instigation of Satan, who will try by every means in his power to destroy the penitent's confidence. These suggestions must be resisted by making it a duty to say all that is in the mind, commencing with that which perhaps one feels least inclined to disclose.

"The fourth rule is that of obedience. Obedience must be without any limit even in matters which cost most pain, and which are most repugnant to personal inclinations and views. We must never allow ourselves any formal resistance on the part of the will, nor even any interior judgment against the director. I have spoken elsewhere of obedience; I repeat here that it cannot be carried too far in these matters; it must be complete, even as our candour and confidence must be.

"The fifth rule is, in approaching our director, to raise our estimate of him above the man, and to consider God only in him. We must be attached to him for God's sake only, and we must be prepared to leave him if God wishes it, saying with Job, 'The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.'[1] We must be persuaded that as God has provided a guide for our

[1] Job i. 21.

good, it will also be to our welfare if He deprives us of him again. Even though He withdraw all human succour, His bounty can supply our needs in abundance.

" 'The just man lives by faith '[1] says St. Paul, after the Prophet Habacuc. This faith, which constitutes the life of the just, is not the faith common to all Christians, by which they are enabled to believe the dogmas which God has revealed to His Church. It is a special and personal faith, that has for its object God's supernatural Providence in the guidance of souls that surrender themselves to Him."[2]

Although, in general, there should be no distinction between the director and the confessor, still it may be preferable for some to receive special direction from one who, though not the ordinary confessor, may be able to offer the particular help required.

"A person may have one priest for confessor and another for director," says Quadrupani. "St. Francis de Sales used to direct many souls by his advice and his letters, without being their ordinary confessor. The Saint says: 'One discloses one's entire soul to the director: to the confessor only what is sin. Exceptional qualities are needed in a director, but less is demanded for the duty of confessor.' "[3]

In conclusion, we may add that all direction, whether written or spoken, must necessarily be of limited application, because it only concerns those who really tend to perfection.

[1] Rom. i. 17. [2] P. Grou, S.J., *op. cit.*, p. 113.
[3] *Op. cit.*

CHAPTER II

ON SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD

THE best remedy against discouragement, whether it arise from real faults or only imaginary ones, is submission to God's Will. And if in physical affliction a patient be misunderstood, or even hardly dealt with, he must, in the same way, comfort himself with the thought of God. "If God be for us, who shall be against us?"[1] This submission will be the opening up of the way of salvation for the former, and the road to holiness for those who have to carry their cross; for in their cross they will learn to see, as so many sinners as well as Saints have seen, their Saviour extending His arms of mercy to strengthen and to sanctify them. This is all well known. But, unfortunately, we too often live as though we did not know, and we attach so much importance to matters that merit no attention whatever—to things transitory or even dangerous, which doubtless we shall one day come to regret that we ever loved or even knew at all.

We are well aware that we must practise penance. We cannot forget the words of our Saviour, telling us that they who do not penance will perish. We know that there is not a Saint but has bought his sanctity at the cost of penance.

[1] Rom. viii. 31.

Our Lady's message to Bernadette was: Penance, penance, penance!

But what is to be our penance? When we undertake the practice of self-denial, we may easily deceive ourselves as to the true nature, the term, and the occasion of the penance which we voluntarily impose upon ourselves.

St. Francis de Sales writes on this matter: "Out of hundreds of delicious fruits, Eve chose the one which was forbidden. And doubtless she never would have eaten that, if she had been allowed to take it. It is something the same that happens when we will serve God according to our will, and not according to His. Saul was ordered to lay waste and destroy all that he found in Amalec. He destroyed everything except what was precious, and with that he offered sacrifice; but God declared that He did not value sacrifice contrary to obedience. Perhaps God orders me to work for souls, and I would rather remain in contemplation. The contemplative life is excellent, but not when it destroys obedience. We must never choose according to our own will. We must will what God wills, and when it is His will that I serve Him in one matter, I must not wish to do so in another. God would have Saul serve as a King and captain, and Saul would offer service as a priest. Beyond doubt this latter office was more excellent than the former, but God wishes before all things to be obeyed.

"Always bear in mind that what we do draws its true value from the conformity that we have with the Will of God. So that in eating and drinking, if I do it because it is God's will that I per-

formed these actions, I am more pleasing to God than if I underwent death itself without that intention."[1]

Who can give us the assurance that our voluntary penance is neither too light or too severe, or too long, or inopportune, or imprudent? And how can we be sure that we are thus fulfilling the Will of God, and working out our sanctification? But no mistake is possible when our penance in the form of suffering is sent us by God.[2] And what can be more consoling and precious to us than this absolute assurance that we are really fulfilling His holy Will? In practice we do not always act upon these principles. We give ourselves credit for goodwill; we pursue an ideal and mark out a place in life. And with what we judge to be true humility, we present this plan to God, protesting that we will carry it out for God's glory, our own sanctification, and the welfare of our neighbours. With these sentiments we feel there can be no doubt of God's approval. But then comes the question whether God's plan for us is conformable to that which we have devised. In many instances it might be found that God's designs in our regard are very

[1] Letter 735.

[2] It is probably according to this principle that St. Theresa says the soul gains more by the act of accepting pains from God than she would have merited in ten years' labour according to her own choice (*Chemin de la Perfection*, chap. xxxviii.).

"I say that self-effacement is the best exercise for everyone: and our own choice detracts greatly from our virtues. And who can make us take pleasure in self-abasement except that Lord Who valued it so highly in His own life that He would die to preserve it?" (St. Francis de Sales, Letter 88).

different. In our plans there may be crosses, but of what kind? Perhaps of a very simple nature, and full of attractions compared with those which God has in store for us, and which we fear so much more. Perhaps in our scheme we have set in the forefront and in special prominence as our duty—study, knowledge, disinterestedness, sacrifice, self-denial, etc. We will devote ourselves to parents, family, friends, to the poor, or to the sick; we are prepared to practise penance, to fast, to pray, to save souls, to immolate ourselves in the cloister. And Our Lord says to us: "If you desire all this, you must desire it only because I wish it; and supposing I do not wish it, will it still be your desire? You wish for all this because you aim at what is good. But I, too, can only wish for what is good. But you may wish for it in a way which is not in agreement with the way in which I desire it."[1]

"My thoughts are not your thoughts," God says by the prophet, "nor your ways My ways. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are My ways exalted above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts."[2]

Without doubt, all the good works which we mark out for ourselves are excellent in themselves, and to those who, for the love of God, place at the service of their neighbour their intelligence, knowledge,

[1] "We must judge of things," says St. Francis de Sales, "not according to our taste, but according to that of God: this is the great principle to go by. If we would be saints according to our own will, we shall never be saints in the true sense: we must be saints according to the Will of God" (Letter 740).

[2] Isa. lv. 8, 9.

activity, and health, God awards a very great recompense. But the same function and the same position are not assigned by God to all. St. Angela of Foligno represents God as saying: "Those whom I love more dearly are seated nearer to Me at My banquet. With Me they take a share of the bread of tribulation; they drink of the sacred cup, the chalice of My Passion. God sends greater trials to His favourite children, and He sends them as a very special grace." Some Saints have spent their whole life in suffering and trials. They have been forsaken, looked down upon, badly treated, and betrayed. Some have never preached, nor taught, nor performed any of the good works which we propose to ourselves. They have attained an eminent degree of holiness because they have borne themselves as they should in their sufferings, with love and submission to God's holy Will. Thus they have fulfilled the duty assigned to them. Perfection consists in loving and serving God.

Father Weiss, the Dominican, writes: "All Christian life and all perfection must have its roots in the interior. The exterior life has its importance, but it must proceed from the interior. It is the interior life that is the essence and soul of true perfection. . . . Hence he who does not grasp the necessity and the sublimity of the interior life can neither understand nor tolerate the religious state. All external activity, wondrous and admirable though it be, can never make up perfection. The elements that go to make it are—silence, calm, purity of heart, recollection, retirement, humility, modesty, detachment from earthly things, the con-

tinual practice of the presence of God, constant prayer, especially interior prayer. Without these there can be no idea of perfection. So the state of perfection is impossible without these interior virtues. One may give himself up to immense activity, and at the same time depart farther and farther from the obligations of his state. Another may think himself incapable of doing the slightest good, and yet be perfect, because he possesses within him the two things that make up perfection and the essence of the religious life—namely, the love of God,[1] and an earnest desire to do all that God requires of him.[2]

Religious are not perfect because they belong to the state of perfection. Nor does this oblige them to be perfect. In this respect a Bishop lies under greater obligations, for by his vocation he assumes to himself the task of practising perfection, and communicating the same to others.[3] But the duty of the religious is to aspire to his personal perfection by all the means that are to be found in the sphere of his vocation. Though a religious might draw the attention of all towards him for his eloquence, learning, or skill in the direction of souls; though he were much sought after as a confessor, or renowned as a teacher; or, in the case of a nun, though she be an excellent mistress or nursing-sister—if these do not busy themselves, above all, about their own sanctification, then would they deserve the reproval of forgetting their own peculiar duties, and of wandering outside the spirit of their vocation. They might

[1] St. Thomas, 2. 2, *Q*. 184, *A*. 1. [2] *Ibid.*, *A*. 3.
[3] *Ibid.*, *A*. 6, 7.

be likened to rose-trees planted by the roadside, or to artists turned to scullions.

On the other hand, these religious may find themselves reduced to inactivity by sickness, and they may complain with bitterness that they are eating the bread they have not earned, and live at the expense of others. Nevertheless, they fill their allotted place. They merit esteem and respect if only they spend their leisure hours in prayer, in the practice of patience, in self-denial and humility."[1] What is said of religious may be applied in some sense to all Christians. For, without belonging to the state of perfection, all are called to a degree of perfection required for salvation; and, besides, they may reach perfection without pledging themselves thereto in the state of religion. "There is a perfection," says St. Thomas, "which consists in excluding from the soul all that is opposed to charity, as mortal sin. Charity cannot exist without this kind of perfection, and consequently it is necessary for salvation.[2] Certain persons may very well be perfect without belonging to the state of perfection. Some may be in the state of perfection without being perfect."[3]

According to St. Bernard, Christian perfection means: "Performing common and daily actions in an uncommon manner—not in doing either great things, nor many." Or, again, according to another writer, it consists in "the abdication of self. The number of those who really surrender themselves is small. I esteem the one who is able to give up

[1] *Apologie du Christianisme*, x., "La Perfection," Lyon Nouvellet.

[2] 2. 2, *Q*. 184, *A*. 2. [3] *Ibid*., *A*. 4.

self as a great man, though he should only be capable of very lowly occupation."[1]

In the sense of those questions of the first chapter of the prophecy of Isaias, we might consider God asking of us: "Who tells you that I require your work, your activity, and the rest that you offer Me, and that I have any need of you at all? Would not your ordinary counsellors probably be hostile to My teachings? Your advisers are many, and all the more dangerous as they know how to put forward these suggestions with cunning and skill, hiding the source from whence they proceed. They are chiefly *pride*, and *pleasure*, and *sensuality*. Compare their suggestions with Mine—the life of My friends, the Saints, with that of worldlings—and then judge if that can possibly be aught more noble or more lovable than what bears a likeness to Me. And there is nothing that bears a closer resemblance to Me than a man who is laden with every kind of cross, with suffering and pain; for none could carry a cross heavier than Mine.[2] And from whom can I obtain more glorious results than from those who resemble Me most, living in sadness and trouble? My Divine Nature has wrought nothing more wonderful in human nature than the love of the Cross and of suffering. At the same time, in love and justice, I do not impose upon any a burden heavier

[1] Père Lacordaire. Life by Père Chocarne. Paris, Poussielgue.

[2] "The pains of Christ," says St. Thomas, have exceeded all the pains which men can endure in this life, not merely by reason of their intensity and duration, but also by reason of the delicate nature of the Sufferer, and His willing acceptance of all the suffering proportionate to the end which He had in view in His Passion" (P. iii., *Q*. 46, *A*. 6, *c*).

than he can bear, and none can know better than I the extent of each one's capacity. I love to remain in the soul in which, by a life of pain, I see My own bleeding wounds produced again. And those whom I have chosen to nourish here with the bitter food of the Cross, it is My design to satiate in eternity with the sweetness of My Divinity.[1] Only in this way can I touch the inmost recesses of the soul. Hence men should offer themselves in sacrifice with all humility, and despoil themselves entirely of all that is purely nature" (Tauler).

This, then, is what God wishes of us. Could we desire to set up our plans against His, or in any way set mere human prudence in the balance against His supreme Wisdom? Often we act as though it were for us to correct the ordinances of God. Only on reflection do we realize our mistakes, so little do we possess the true spirit of penance, the spirit of the Saints, the spirit of Jesus Christ, which runs counter to all natural feeling and to the worldly prudence that leads us astray, and often makes us rebel.

We must, then, be sincere with God. We daily pray that His Will may be done, but often on condition that there be nothing to oppose or interfere with our own. We hope that our will may be done, because we hardly suppose there can be any other

[1] "The Cross," says St. John Chrysostom, "is the key which has opened Paradise to us. It is said that the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and that those bear it away who make generous efforts against themselves. I will go farther and say that he who is attached to the Cross carries off the Kingdom of Heaven without effort. Nothing separates heaven and the Cross. After the Cross follows the entrance into Paradise" (*Hom. de divit*).

will than our own, which seems to us so natural and so reasonable. "It is the constant perversity of men," said St. Augustine, "that whereas they must live according to God's will, they would wish to force God to theirs. They must not be corrected, but they would have God change according to their ideas!"[1] Our Lord said to St. Catharine of Genoa: "You should never be heard to say, 'I will,' or 'I will not.' Never use the expression *mine*, but *ours*. Never excuse, but always be ready to accuse yourself. I wish you to regard as the foundation of your spiritual life these words of the 'Our Father': 'Thy will be done.' And this means that you conform yourself perfectly to the Will of God in all things: in all that relates to body or soul, or relatives or friends, possessions, joys, or sorrows."

"No one," says Mgr. Turinaz, "is called to be a servant of Truth that is unknown, of Justice, so often outraged, unless he accept the chalice of Gethsemani, unless he taste of the gall and vinegar, unless he wear the crown of thorns upon his brow, and lovingly embrace that Cross whereon one must suffer and die in silence."[2]

St. Francis de Sales writes: "The mother of Saints James and John asked of Our Lord that her two sons might sit, one at His right and the other

[1] Blessed Sontino, a nun of the Order of St. Dominic, saw in vision the glory of the blessed. According to the degree of their merits these happy souls were mingled with the choirs of angels. Some whom she had known on earth she saw placed amongst the seraphim. She asked why they had been elevated to so high a grade of glory, and she learned that they had merited this reward by their perfect conformity to the will of God.

[2] *La Croix*. Mandement du Carême de 1884.

at His left hand in the Kingdom of Heaven. Now, our soul has two children, our own judgment and our own will, which would wish to take the first places at right and left. Our judgment wishes to gain the ascendancy above all, and not submit to others, and the will would be equally independent. Many will obey exteriorly, but very few will submit their judgment, and abandon their own will entirely. A good many may be found who humble themselves, mortify themselves, wear the hair-shirt, practise penance and austerities, and exercise themselves in prayer, but very few are those who completely surrender their own will and judgment. How necessary a point it is to die to one's own will; never can the value of self-denial be over-estimated!

"One day the great St. Basil, considering this matter, asked himself: 'Would it not be possible to serve God perfectly in rough penances and austerities and in great deeds for Our Lord, at the same time retaining our own will?' At once he thought he heard our Saviour answering him: 'I emptied Myself of My glory; I came down from heaven, and took upon Myself all human miseries, and at last died the death of the Cross. And why was all that? Was it for the mere sake of suffering in order to save men, or of My own choice? No; the only reason why I did so much was to submit Myself to the Will of My Father. And to show that it was not My own choice, I give you now to understand that had it been My Father's Will that I should die some other death than that of the Cross, or that I should live on in happiness, I should have been equally ready to obey, because I came into this world, not to

do My will, but the will of My Father Who sent Me.'

"There can, indeed, be no true virtue without the death of our own will. The less we live according to our own tastes, the less choice we exercise in our actions, the more goodness and solid devotions will there be in our lives. On the other hand, he who is not altogether resigned will find no repose whichever way he may turn. No position is comfortable to those that suffer from fever; before they have been a quarter of an hour in one posture, they wish to change for another. It is not the bed that is at fault, but it is the fever that torments them continually. One who has not the fever of self-will can content himself with anything, provided he knows he is serving God. He does not worry as to the capacity in which God employs him; for him it is all the same as long as he fulfils the Divine Will.

"These are the conditions with which we should make our surrender to God. Let Him carry out His holy Will as soon as He desires in respect of us, our affairs, and our designs; let Him break through ours and utterly destroy it whenever He pleases. Happy indeed are they whom God can treat according to His good pleasure, whom He leads either through tribulation or consolation. If they have any choice, the real servants of God ever esteem more highly the path of adversity as being more conformable to that of the Divine Master. He would work out our salvation and the glory of His Name only through the cross and shame.

"Think, then, how happy we should be if the holy Will of God ruled in us. Never should we be

guilty of sin; we should never hanker after a life according to our humours and inclinations, because God's Will is the standard of all goodness. As St. Bernard says, it is self-will that will burn eternally in hell. If it be found in heaven, it must be cast out. The reason that the fallen angels were expelled was because they would have their own way, and wished to be like to God. For that they were cast down into the pit. Where self-will is found in the world, it spoils and ruins all.

"When we discover aught in ourselves which is not conformable to the Will of our dear Saviour, we must prostrate ourselves before Him, and tell Him that we detest, that we repudiate this and all else in us that can displease Him, or be in any way contrary to His love. At the same time we should promise Him that we will wish for nothing that may not be conformable to His good pleasure and Divine Will. In a word, we may say: 'Blessed are they who do not do their own will upon earth: because God will carry it out above in heaven.'"[1]

To stand and persevere in the truth we must ever remember this word of Our Lord: "If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me."[2] This is the only way that leads to truth and to Life Eternal. Our motto should be: "In all things God's will, and not ours." This is the simple but glorious plan which it is hard, but not impossible, to realize.

[1] Quoted by Père Million in the *Manrèse Salésien. Méditations pour tous les Jours et Fêtes de l'Année*, p. 263. (A book that can be highly recommended to all who seriously aspire to the spiritual life.) Paris, Beauchesne, 1906.
[2] Luke ix. 23.

This it is that will bring to the soul that adopts it and follows it out faithfully light in deliberation, constancy in effort, strength in its hopes, and peace in its trials.

"Peace of soul," says Père Jean, "will be found chiefly in conformity to God's Will. This must be your daily bread. Do not worry yourself as to what that adorable Will may perhaps demand of you. God will make that known to us, and all that we need is to abandon ourselves into His Hands.

"You may have great hopes and great desires, and yet at the same time strive to hope for and desire nothing but the accomplishment of God's holy Will. This is, as it were, the pillow upon which the soul can calmly rest."[1]

[1] *Op. cit.*, chap. xiv.

CHAPTER III

ON THE DANGER OF DISCOURAGEMENT

DISCOURAGEMENT is one of the ills to which all are more or less exposed. It is the more likely to affect the sick and suffering because they see around them many motives for dejection, and none to stimulate them to hope and confidence.

Some are sorely cast down at the thought of faults more or less serious, or numerous, and not repented of. Others are dejected at the memory of faults already atoned for, or at the recurrence of always the same faults in their lives. Whatever the cause, this sadness works evil effects in body and soul. These occasions of depression should be regarded as means of acquiring spiritual benefit, but in most instances they are turned to the contrary effect. And in not a few cases the trouble is merely concerning imaginary faults.

Often a disturbed state of mind follows upon certain attacks or phases of nervous derangement. Then the patients are much exercised as to the best and most expeditious method of repairing their faults, and are most anxious to make a good sacramental confession. Then, perhaps, courage or resolution will fail them, or a priest is not available, and the confession is deferred. After a few days,

or even hours, they recover their tranquillity, the sins seem to have gone with the nervous attack, and they no longer feel the need of the Sacrament of Penance. The patient then wonders how he could have got into such a state of mind, as he can now reproach himself with no very serious fault.

But as long as his mind is disquieted, it is hopeless to try to convince him of his error. The only possible means of calming him is to persuade him to bear his trouble with patience so as not to forfeit the merit of it.

Penitent souls ought indeed to be able to repel all feelings of discouragement at apparent shortcomings when once they recognize that they are subject to a malady which works so strange an influence on the reason and will. And besides, though they had been guilty of crimes and sins without number, such dejection of mind is never permitted, for the simple reason that God's mercy is infinite, and the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins is an article of faith.

"There is so little faith in the world," says Blessed Vianney, the Curé d'Ars, "that many either hope too much or fall into despair. Some say: 'I have done too much evil; the good God cannot pardon me.' This is a serious blasphemy—attempting to set a limit to the mercy of God which is beyond all limits. . . ."

A priest was once preaching on Hope and the Mercy of God, and set forth for his hearers the motives of trust in God, and at the same time he was in a state of despair himself. After his sermon a young man asked to go to confession, and at the end added: "Father, I have done so much evil, I

feel I am lost." "You must not say that," said the priest. "You must never despair!" "Well," rejoined the youth, "you tell me not to give way to despair, but what of yourself?" This was a light of grace to the confessor. He was struck with the simple remark, overcame his temptation, and afterwards attained to great sanctity in the religious state. God had sent a special messenger in the person of this young man to save him from his despair.

Our good God is as ready to grant us pardon when we ask it as a mother is to snatch her child from the danger of being burnt.

Our Lord acts with His creatures on earth like a mother carrying her child in her arms. "The child is at times naughty—perhaps kicks and bites and scratches—but the mother takes no notice; she knows if she lets it go, it will fall, being unable to walk without help. So Almighty God puts up with our bad treatment of Him; He tolerates our thoughtless ways and pardons our follies. He has compassion, in spite of us."[1]

We all know that Our Divine Lord "awaits only one tear of sincere contrition in order to receive the worst of sinners into the embrace of His mercy,"[2] though he might be guilty of crimes as horrible as that of Judas. Thence it is that Our Lord was able to say that there is joy in heaven on one sinner that doth penance more than upon ninety-nine just that need not penance.[3] Such a sinner is often an object of contempt to those who are led by the spirit of the world—to those who are ever ready to condemn

[1] *Esprit du Bienheureux*, J. M. B. Vianney, chap. xx. Paris, P. Tequi.
[2] François Coppée. [3] Luke xv. 7.

everything in others and excuse everything in self. And meanwhile this same sinner is an object of love in God's sight, because He is ever ready to forgive and to forget. Therefore does God constantly draw the sinner to Himself by all possible means, and offers him grace which always abounds more where sin has abounded,[1] provided that the sinner is prepared to *humble himself and repent*. In thus dealing with the sinner Our Saviour does but fulfil His promise contained in those words: " I came not to call the just, but sinners."[2]

Bossuet writes: " Jesus Christ as Son of God and Truth Itself, whilst taking pleasure in seeing the sinner at His feet and returning to the right way, is yet more enamoured of Innocence which has never been tarnished. . . . But in becoming Our Saviour He gives proof of other sentiments for the love of us. Our God gives the preference to the Innocent; but, let us rejoice, Christians, this merciful Saviour has come to seek the sinful; He lives for sinners, because it is for sinners that He is sent."[3]

It follows from these considerations that all penitent souls should banish all feelings of disgust and set themselves to purify themselves yet more from their faults, and at the same time form a *deliberate purpose* not to transgress again. Then those that are afflicted must take this into account and recognize that their state of trouble and anguish will probably last as long as their illness, whatever they may do to be rid of it. They must also realize that it is the vocation of some souls to suffer either

[1] Rom.v. 20. [2] Mark ii. 17.
[3] *Ier Sermon sur la Nativité de la très Sainte Vierge.*

for themselves or for others, and that such will sanctify themselves precisely in this state, seeing that under these conditions, and not under others, will God bestow upon them the grace necessary to work out their sanctification. For their assistance we venture to set forth the following counsels, which, though they apply to all who would draw some spiritual profit from their shortcomings, may have some special application for those patients whose interests we especially have at heart:

"It happens," says a pious and learned author, "that some are surprised at their failings, they are troubled and ashamed at their recurrence, and they allow themselves to be carried away with feelings of impatience and diffidence in themselves. All these are effects of self-love, and are all more pernicious than the failings themselves. It is a mistake to be surprised at having fallen. The surprise indicates a lack of self-knowledge. It should rather be matter of surprise that we do not fall more frequently and with more serious faults, and we should tender our thanks to God that we are preserved from worse offences. People often upset themselves when they find themselves transgressing; they become agitated, and think of it for hours or days together. This is always a mistake. When we have fallen, the only thing to do is to rise calmly, turn to God by an act of love, ask pardon, and think no more of what has happened, till we have to accuse ourselves of it. And even if we were to forget it when we make our confession, it should not be any matter to disquiet us.

"Then sometimes people feel false shame regard-

ing their sins, and can scarcely summon up courage to tell them to the confessor. The thought comes: 'What will he think of me after so many promises and protestations?' The fact is the priest cannot but esteem more highly the penitent who says everything with simplicity and humility. If he observes that you have great difficulty in disburdening yourself, he can only attribute it to pride. His confidence in you will be lessened if you show any lack of candour towards him.

"But the worst case is, perhaps, when people are angered and put out at the sight of their faults: angered because they are impatient, as St. Francis de Sales says. It ought surely to be clear to anyone that this is pride pure and simple—to feel humbled because one has not been strong enough in the trial, to be shown to be less holy than one thought, and to find that one's motive in aspiring to exemption from faults and failings was only to obtain some credit, or to be able to feel that one had passed a day or a week without reproach. Then follows discouragement. People will give up their good practices one after another; prayer will be lessened; the idea of perfection becomes an impossible one, which never can be realized. Then the question is put: What is the use of such self-restraint and continual watching over myself? To what purpose is so much recollection and mortification, since I never correct myself? I fall continually, and I never become any better.

"This is one of Satan's most subtle traps. And the only way of avoiding it is never to be discouraged at all, but to say: 'Though I fall twenty times or

even a hundred times a day, I will rise up each time and continue my way as though nothing had occurred.'

"It matters little how many falls a person may have had, provided he arrives safely at his journey's end, and God will not then reproach him with his failures. Often enough the failing comes because we are going forward too quickly, with too much zeal to take necessary precautions. Timid and cautious souls who ever stop to see where they place their feet, and who are on the alert every moment to avoid a false step or to avoid staining themselves on the way, do not progress as rapidly as the others, and death often surprises them in the midst of their course. It is not they who commit the fewest faults who are the most holy, but those who have most courage, generosity, and love, and who make the greatest efforts to overcome themselves, and have no fear of tripping or falling or staining themselves a little, so long as they advance.

St. Paul has said that all things work unto good for them that love God. Yes, all turns to their advantage, even their shortcomings or their more serious lapses. God sometimes allows these faults in order to cure us of our vain presumption, and to teach us what we are and of what we are capable. David recognized that the adultery and homicide of which he had been guilty served to keep him in constant distrust of himself: *It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me, that I may learn Thy justifications*. The fall of St. Peter was a most useful lesson for him. The humility that he afterwards learned disposed him to receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit,

to become the Head of the Church, and preserved him from the dangers to be met with in so eminent a position. St. Paul, in the success of his apostolate, preserved himself from pride and vanity by recalling that he had been a blasphemer and a persecutor of the Church of God. Then a humiliating temptation, from which God did not see fit to deliver him, acted as a balance to the sublimity of his revelations.

"If God could thus use great sins to so wondrous an advantage, who can doubt that He will make our daily faults contribute to our sanctification? It is pointed out by masters of the spiritual life that God often leaves in very holy souls certain faults which they do not succeed in removing with all their efforts. The explanation is that they thus have constant experience of their weakness and of what they would be without grace. Thus they are preserved from becoming vain of the favours they receive, and their humility disposes them to receive such favours from God. There is maintained within them a certain displeasure with themselves and a guard against the snares of self-love. The recollection of their faults sustains their fervour, maintains them in a state of watchfulness, of confidence in God, and of continual prayer. When a child wanders away from its mother and falls, it returns to her with all the more tenderness to have its pain assuaged, and it also learns not to wander away again. Experience of its own weakness and of the mother's love inspires fresh motives of attachment to her.

"The faults that occur in our lives are often the occasion of generous acts of virtue which we should

not otherwise have been prompted to perform, and God permits these faults with this greater good in view. Thus, for example, He will allow a burst of temper, some harshness or impatience, in order to put us in the way of exercising an act of humility which will abundantly atone for our fault and any bad example we may have given. The fault was committed in a first impulse; the reparation was carried out with reflection, self-denial, and with a full and deliberate will. And thus we produce an act which in its agreeableness in the sight of God far outweighs the displeasure that was caused Him by the imperfection.

"It may be also that by means of our shortcomings God hides from others the sanctity we have acquired, so that we may still receive various humiliations.

"God is the great Master. Let us ever leave Him to act, knowing that He never can fail in His work. We must make up our minds to avoid anything that could in the slightest manner give Him offence. But when we have fallen, let us feel regret for His sake, and not for ourselves. Let us cherish the humiliation that redounds to us from the failure, and even ask God to use that fault to our humiliation and to His glory. He will then indeed do as we ask. By this means He will lead us forward much more rapidly, perhaps, than by a life which, apparently more regular and pious, will yet be less efficacious for the destruction of our self-love.

"If at any time God asks certain duties of us, we must never refrain from performing them under pretext of the faults that we may be led to commit in

their discharge. Better do good with some imperfection than leave all undone.

"At one time, it may be, we shall hesitate to make a necessary correction lest we be tempted to do so with too much warmth. At another we shall feel inclined to avoid the company of persons whose faults move us to ill-humour or impatience. But how are we to acquire virtue if we shun the occasions of practising them? It would be a more serious fault to turn aside from all these opportunities than to expose oneself to some danger of failure. Only let our intention be ever upright; let us boldly go when duty calls us, and be assured that God is indulgent enough to pardon us the faults to which we may be exposed in the discharge of His service and in the execution of our desire to please Him."[1]

These are the sentiments that we must endeavour to cultivate when we recall our faults. Far from letting them trouble us or suggest any discouragement or relaxation of our spiritual exercises, we must humble ourselves at the sight of them, and bless God because He is willing still to welcome us in spite of our failings. They will be for us a sure preservative against a false security, and the very effort we need to rise again and to maintain our constancy will be to our spiritual credit. As in all else, we must always keep up our courage, looking upwards towards heaven with trust in God Whose goodness knows no limits. In this spirit we must address ourselves to our *daily duty*, which both earns us our reward and is at the same time the test of our faith, love, and goodwill.

[1] P. Grou, S.J., *Manuel des Âmes Intérieures*. Paris, V. Lecoffre. See also chap. xxvi. of the *Spiritual Combat*. *Cf.*, Le Père Michel, S.J., *Traité du Découragement*. Paris, Téqui.

CHAPTER IV

ON PRAYER, AS A HELP TOWARDS CURE

A CERTAIN lack of instruction in spiritual matters even among pious persons has led me to treat somewhat fully of some points that might be regarded as very elementary. The same motive suggests the utility of a separate chapter on Prayer on account of its capital importance. St. Alphonsus Liguori says: "Preachers, confessors, and spiritual books should inculcate nothing so warmly as the obligation of prayer. It is true that there are many other means of great value for maintaining and increasing the grace of God. The faithful must be told to avoid occasions of sin, to frequent the Sacraments, to fight against temptations, to listen to the Word of God, and to meditate on the Eternal Truths, etc. All agree that these are practices of great worth. But, I ask, of what use are sermons, meditations, and all other devotions, prescribed by masters of the spiritual life, without prayer? Our Lord has declared that He will give His graces only to them that pray. 'Ask,' He says, 'and you shall receive.'[1] According to the ordinary laws of Providence, without prayer, meditations, resolutions, and promises are useless. If we do not pray, we shall always

[1] John xvi. 24.

remain unfaithful to all the lights that God sends us, and to all the engagements that we have undertaken. The reason is because, in order actually to carry out good, to conquer temptations, to practise virtue, and, in a word, to observe in its entirety the Divine law, it is not enough to have light, to appreciate duty, and to resolve well with regard to it. We need, besides, the actual help of God, and this actual help Our Lord gives only to those that pray, and that pray perseveringly. That heavenly light, those right ideas, those good purposes, are all of avail to make us turn at once to prayer when there threatens some danger of transgression of God's law. Then by prayer it is that we obtain the Divine assistance that keeps us from sin. And if in these cases we were to neglect prayer, we should assuredly succumb."[1]

"How powerful is that person who relies on God alone," says Boudon, "though he be far away in the desert without occupying himself in any external function. Against such were directed the storms of hell as in the case of the ancient solitaries—attacks that were indeed strange and terrible and ceaseless. And this explains the opposition that is aimed against souls given up to prayer, because this is one of the surest and most efficacious means of relying only on God."

But prayer is especially indispensable to those that are called upon to suffer and that find themselves in sadness. "Is any of you sad?" says St. James, "let him pray."[2] Indeed, by prayer we draw nigh to God, Who is perfect happiness, the

[1] *Du Grand Moyen de la Prière*, Introduction. Paris, Casterman.
[2] James v. 13.

Source of all good, and therefore of all joy. So that it should be no matter of surprise that prayer can assuage suffering and dispel sadness. Theologians, and St. Thomas conspicuous amongst them, count amongst the natural effects of prayer "spiritual consolation."[1] The same Saint commenting upon St. Paul's advice, "Be instant in prayer,"[2] says expressly that joy is one of the fruits of prayer.

Everyone knows that prayer is of obligation, because it is necessary for salvation. "To ask by prayer," says St. Thomas, "falls under the precept of religion recorded by St. Matthew: 'Ask, and you shall receive'" (vii. 7).[3] "To be saved," he writes elsewhere, "it is necessary to fight and conquer; without God's grace it is not possible to resist temptations, and this grace is not given except in answer to prayer; so that there is no salvation without prayer. It is by this means only that God wishes to bestow upon us all the graces that He has decided from all eternity to grant us. The necessity of praying does not lie in any need of making known to God our wants, but it is required in order that we may understand ourselves the necessity of having recourse to God to obtain from Him the assistance we need to work out our salvation and to recognize that God alone is the Author of all the good we have. Thus, just as the Lord will have us sow the grain and tend the vine in order to obtain bread and wine, even so He ordains that it is by this means of prayer that we shall obtain the graces necessary for our salvation."[4]

[1] 2. 2, *Q.* 83, *A.* 13 and 15. [2] Rom. xii. 12.
[3] 2. 2, *Q.* 83, *A.* 3, *ad* 2m.
[4] *Ibid.*, *A.* 2, *et alibi passim.*

Thus we see that prayer is the ordinary method of obtaining help and all the graces that we have need of. "Without Me, you can do nothing,"[1] says Our Lord. "To him that is in danger of shipwreck," says St. John Chrysostom, "prayer is the anchor of safety; to the poor, an immense treasure of wealth; for the sick, an efficacious remedy, and a preservative for him who would keep his good health."[2] According to St. Louis of Granada, prayer is "medicine to the sick, consolation to the afflicted, strength to the weak, salvation for sinners, the joy of the just, the support of the living, the solace of the souls of the dead—a remedy for all the ills of the Church. It is the royal entrance leading to the very Heart of God Himself; it is a foretaste of glory; the manna that contains in itself all sweetness; it is like the ladder of Jacob uniting heaven and earth, by which angels, spiritual men, ascend and descend, offering to God their supplications, and bringing down God's graces."[3]

Whilst prayer has such virtue and is of such importance in itself, still it lacks efficacy, and fails to procure us the graces of which we stand in need, unless it has certain indispensable qualities. The chief of these are, *Humility*, *Confidence*, and *Perseverance*.

A necessary preparation for prayer is to recollect oneself, and to ask, To whom am I going to speak? "In church we should address our prayers to Our Lord, present in the tabernacle; at other times we

[1] John xv. 5.
[2] *Homil.* 31 *ad pop. Ant.*
[3] *La vie Chrétienne d'après Louis de Grenade. La Prière*, par le R. P. Hébrard, Dominicain. Paris, Haton.

should address Him as present in our souls, for He dwells in us as long as we do not drive Him out by mortal sin." This, according to St. Theresa, is the best method of recollection. Then prayer always calls for much reverence. Unless it has this quality, it is not, according to St. Thomas, an act of religion, but rather an offence to the Divine Majesty. In this sense we must take that saying of St. Augustine that the barking of a dog is more agreeable to God than the psalms recited without attention by a minister of the sanctuary.

1. *Humility.*—"The prayer of him that humbleth himself," says Ecclesiasticus, "shall pierce the clouds,"[1] and the Psalmist assures us that God will never despise the contrite and humble heart,[2] but, on the contrary, he that "humbleth himself shall be exalted."[3] The Apostle reminds us that "if any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."[4] To acquire, or to preserve this humility, it is enough to know oneself.[5]

[1] Ecclus. xxxv. 21.
[2] Ps. l. 19.
[3] Matt. xxiii. 12.
[4] Gal. vi. 3.

[5] It is well known that the celebrated maxim, "*Know thyself*" (γνῶθι σεαυτον), inscribed on the front of the temple of Delphi, became the favourite maxim of the philosophers and poets of ancient times. It was a maxim which, according to Juvenal, was sent from Heaven, to be impressed upon the memory and carried in the heart.

Instead of merely esteeming or repeating the sublime truth as too many of those sages did, it is for us to endeavour to reduce it to practice, and we may achieve a profit both intellectual and moral. "The most important result of all intellectual culture," says Feuchtersleben, "is the knowledge of self." And according to the *Imitation*, he that knows himself well, despises himself, and finds no pleasure in being praised by men (bk. i. chap. ii.).

With this knowledge there remains no illusion as to the acquisition and maintenance of humility. It was that self-knowledge that made St. Philip Neri say, on waking in the morning: "Lord, take charge of Philip in the course of this day, otherwise Philip will betray you." The great God, Who has need of no one and takes pleasure in drawing something out of nothing, has ever shown special predilection for this virtue. Hence He said one day to St. Catharine of Siena: "Know, My child, that he who with humility perseveres in asking graces, in time acquires all the virtues."

"The effect of humility in those that pray," says St. Louis of Granada, is to discover to them their extreme poverty, or rather the dreadful abyss of misery to which sin has reduced mankind, with all the other evils consequent upon the fall. . . . Concupiscence, like a fiery horse, rushes man headlong into ways filled with seductions and delights which are but traps and snares laid for his soul. To avoid all these he must have a particular assistance from God, as he must also to rise when he has fallen, or to prevent him falling again when he has once escaped. So wretched is his condition that another special grace is needed, that he may persevere right on to the end. I ask, then, Is not the recognition of this our infirmity calculated to keep us in humility, and to penetrate us with sentiments of lowliness at the time of our prayer? The poor beggar who must solicit public charity from morning till night feels his needs most keenly. So the more we humble ourselves at the sight of our unworthiness, the more fervent and agreeable to God will be the supplications

that we make under the promptings of this our humility."

2. *Confidence.*—It is only by confidence in God, according to St. Bernard, that we can obtain the Divine mercy.[1] "They that hope in the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall take wings as eagles."[2] "Because," says the Psalmist, "he hoped in Me, I will deliver him . . . and I will glorify him."[3] Our Lord's promises are quite explicit as regards trustful prayer. "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive";[4] and again, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."[5]

St. Thomas teaches that even the sinner is heard when he prays, because it is not necessary to be united with God in order to obtain the grace one needs; prayer itself makes men servants before God. So that, according to the angelical Doctor, it is confidence, and not any degree of holiness, which gives force to prayer to obtain what it seeks.[6] So St.

[1] *Serm. de Annunt.* [2] Isa. xl. 31. [3] Ps. xc. 14, 15.
[4] Matt. xxi. 22. [5] *Ibid.*, vii. 7, 8.
[6] 2. 2, *Q.* 83, *A.* 15, *ad* 3. "Prayer addressed to God," says the holy Doctor, "renders us familiar with Him, because by it our mind is raised up to Him and converses with Him in spiritual affections, adoring Him in spirit and in truth. Becoming familiar thus with God, we find the way opened to address Him with increasing confidence. Therefore is it said: 'I have cried aloud'—praying with confidence—'because You have heard me, O my God' (Ps. xvi.). That is to say, a man being admitted by a first prayer unto familiarity with God, then cries a second time with greater confidence."

The sinner cannot pray except by the effect of grace.

John Chrysostom says, what is not obtained through friendship, is obtained by prayer.[1] "There is no grace," the same Saint says again, "which prayer may not obtain, though that prayer proceed from the most criminal of sinners."[2] "If any of you want wisdom," says St. James, "let him ask it of God . . . and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is inconstant in all his ways."[3]

"It is faith," says St. Louis of Granada, "that gives efficacy to our prayers, as it is charity which renders them meritorious. If we render ourselves worthy of God's grace according as we love Him, we may say also that it is our faith which is the measure of our love.[4]

We must not forget what are the foundations upon which our confidence must rest.

"The first is the infinite mercy of God. Of all His perfections, it is mercy that God has wished to show forth most strikingly. The Creation of the Universe shows us His power and wisdom, the Deluge illustrates the rigours of His Justice. It is Redemption showing us this same God made Man, dying on

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Man can do nothing unless he be moved by God. "Without Me you can do nothing" (John xv.). Hence when we speak of a man doing what is required of him, we understand that even that is in his power only under the movement of God" (1. 2, *Q.* 109, *A.* 6, *ad* 2. *Cf.*, 2. 2, *Q.* 83, *A.* 15, *ad* 1).

[1] *Homil.* 56. [2] *Homil.* 33 *in Matt.*

[3] James i. 5-8.

[4] Note the three examples in the Gospel (Matt. viii. and ix.).

the Cross, and shedding the last drop of His blood that tells beyond all His excessive goodness and His infinite tenderness towards us.

"The second basis of our confidence is to be found in the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, Our Saviour, Our Redeemer, Our Advocate and Mediator, Our King, Priest, and Victim, the Corner-stone of the Spiritual Temple, in Whom alone is to be found the hope of salvation."[1] Our Lord tells us explicitly in the Gospel that whatever we ask the Father in His name shall be granted.[2] Further, He has taught us how to pray, and given us the very expressions we should use in order to be heard.[3]

3. *Perseverance.*—"Let nothing hinder thee from praying always,"[4] is the counsel of Ecclesiasticus. "We ought always to pray and not be faint,"[5] to watch and pray without ceasing.[6] It stands to reason that these places of Holy Writ do not refer to vocal and actual prayer, for that would not be possible. St. Louis of Granada explains: "To pray always is to have in oneself in a permanent manner the spirit of prayer, to cherish this spirit, and to give oneself up to the exercise of prayer in the measure determined by the needs of the soul, the necessities of the time, and the inspirations of grace."[7]

The obligation of praying without ceasing is also to be explained by the formal desire to act ever in union with God, referring to Him all our thoughts, words, and actions.

St. Thomas writes: "Vocal forms of prayer and the application of the mind to the consideration and

[1] Acts iv. 11, 12.
[2] John xiv. 13.
[3] Matt. vi. 9.
[4] Ecclus. xviii. 22.
[5] Luke xviii. 1.
[6] Luke xxi. 36.
[7] *Op. cit.*

contemplation of Divine things cannot be maintained incessantly, but a pious intention and a loving desire to order our life and actions to the service and glory of God can and should be uninterrupted."[1] "Inasmuch as a man directs his life towards God, he prays," is another saying of the holy Doctor.[2] Other holy and ascetic writers teach us the same way that all the life of the just man is one grand continual prayer,"[3] and that there is no cessation from prayer, as long as there is no cessation from doing good, and that better prayers proceed from the heart and from good works than from the mouth."[4]

"So let your life chant forth its praise," says St. Austin "that it may never be in silence. Praise God, not merely by your words, but also by your good works. Thus you will offer your praise to God while engaged in your business, or while resting, and even sleeping. There is no time when you cannot praise Him" (*In Ps*. cxlvi.).

According to St. John Chrysostom, we must keep on praying till we have received the favourable sentence of salvation. Though we cannot in strict justice merit final perseverance, as the Council of Trent teaches (Sess. 6, c. 13), still, St. Augustine says we can in some sense deserve it—that is, obtain it—by means of prayer. St. Thomas, too, says that in order to attain it we must pray continually. "To obtain perseverance," writes St. Alphonsus Liguori, "we must have recourse to God at all times. It must be our intention morning

[1] 2. 2, *Q*. 83, *A*. 14.
[2] *In Epist. ad Rom*., chap. i. l. 5.
[3] Origen, *De Oratione*, 12.
[4] S. Bonav, *De uno Confessor*, Serm. 27.

and evening, at meditation, Mass, Communion, and on all occasions; but, above all, in time of temptation, when we must constantly cry out: 'O Lord, come to my assistance; Lord, help me, protect me; leave me not; take pity on me.' What can be more simple than thus to address our Saviour: Lord, assist me and succour me'?" It may often happen that a person cannot fast, give alms, or practise severe mortifications; but one can always pray. We must not be afraid of making ourselves wearisome to our heavenly Father, or of seeming to be too insistent. "This insistence," says St. Gregory, "far from irritating Him, rather appeases Him in our regard."[1] "Although He should kill me," says Job, "I will trust in Him: but yet I will reprove my ways in His sight."[2]

St. Louis of Granada writes: "God often wishes to try our faith and confidence, and see whether the delay which He shows in hearing us will make us have recourse to some other means to obtain what we so ardently desire. At other times, wishing to impress us with a sense of our own misery and powerlessness, He awaits the last extremity before assisting us. So it was that He acted in the case of the chaste Susanna; in that of David besieged in his cave by Saul's followers; and in the case of the city of Bethulia when it was brought to the worst extremity by the Assyrian army.

"The gifts of God are beyond all human estimate, and therefore His bounty, though bent upon ac-

[1] *In Ps. pœnit.*, vi. [2] Job xiii. 15.

cording His best gifts, makes us await them with prolonged desires. In this way we conceive a higher regard for them, preserve them with more care, and render to the Author of them more perfect thanks.

"Our Lord is pleased to try us for a time by these apparent refusals. Thus does He induce us to increase our prayers, and making us pass through the fire of labours, privations, and pains, He chastens us, and renders us more virtuous, just, and holy.

"It may also happen that our Divine Lord seems to have abandoned us, and to turn a deaf ear to our cries and our most heartfelt entreaties. So the Gospel gives us the picture of Jesus sleeping tranquilly in the boat that was beaten about by the storm and in danger of sinking. Furthermore, God sometimes seems to repel us, and makes us feel He is irritated against us. He appears to treat us as Our Lord treated the woman of Chanaan.[1] In its times of distress the soul is moved to send forth its pitiful cries towards heaven. With the Psalmist it exclaims: 'Arise, why sleepest Thou, O Lord? Arise, and cast us not off to the end. Why turnest Thou Thy face away, and forgettest our want and our trouble? For our soul is humbled down to the dust: our belly cleaveth to the earth. Arise, O Lord, help us and redeem us, for Thy name's sake.'[2]

"But *perseverance*, together with full confidence in God's goodness, triumphs over all these difficulties, and at length makes us realize the truth

[1] Matt. xv. [2] Ps. xliii. 23-26.

of that saying of the Apostle: 'To them that love God all things work together unto good.'"[1]

If any sufferer amongst our readers should still be unconvinced of the all-important rôle that prayer plays in human life, we would strongly recommend him to read and meditate upon the following reflections of Blessed Jean Vianney, the Curé of Ars:

"Prayer," he says, "is a lifting up of our soul towards God. We may also say it is a sweet intercourse of the soul with its God, of a child with its father, of a subject with his sovereign, of a servant with h s master, of a friend with a friend to whom he can confide all his disappointments and troubles. Or it will be an even better description if we say that in prayer God receives into His embrace a wretched creature in order that He may communicate to him every kind of blessing. Do we need anything more to make us feel the happiness of prayer? Here we can speak with our good God, with angels and saints, and thus grow more spiritual by such holy conversations. As we pray, our mind and heart, little by little, detach themselves from things created, despise the world and all its seductions, and learn to love and attend only to the good things of heaven.

"Prayer brings God down to us. When our prayer is properly made, it pierces the vault of heaven and rises to the very throne of Jesus Himself, opens the treasure of His graces, and returns with abundant blessings to the suppliant.

"Prayer, again, opens the eyes of the soul, and

[1] Rom. viii. 28 (S. Louis of Grenada, *op. cit.*).

makes it see the depth of its misery and the need of having recourse to God; it renders it fearful of its own weakness. The Christian who is in the habit of praying well learns to count on God only, and never trusts himself. For, in truth, without prayer we are helpless, whilst with it we can command heaven and earth, and they obey. A fervent prayer is like a sweetly perfumed oil that spreads throughout the soul and makes it feel something of the happiness which the blessed enjoy in heaven.

"Prayer is to the soul as rain to the earth. Dress and till the soil as you will, if the rain fails your labour goes for nothing. So, also, perform as many good works as you will, if you do not pray well and often, you cannot hope to be saved.

"The soul that gives up prayer dies of starvation, and the one that prays but little may be likened to the bird that is strong of wing, but shut up in captivity: it cannot use its wings, or rises but little from the earth. On the other hand, the one who prays with fervour and constancy, like the swallow rises easily and high above the world; it reaches even the throne of God, and delights in gazing on His Divine attributes. . . .

"A good Christian will never regard his time of prayer as lost time, but rather as the happiest and most precious time of his day, because it is then that God communicates so many consolations. Indeed, he recognizes that of all his joys the greatest is to realize that God grants him an audience every day of his life! It is an immense favour that is bestowed upon him. And so he will be sorry to have to leave his prayer, and his prayer-time will

seem all too short, and will appear to go by with lightning speed. Though he may not remain corporally engaged in prayer, his heart and soul will always be in a state of prayer.

"How is it that the saints on earth never grow weary of loving and contemplating God? It is because in prayer they experience an ever fresh sweetness and ever new joys. And why should not we do the same, since it is in our power? If we could only succeed, what a happy life we should lead, preparing ourselves for heaven!"[1]

[1] Dom Germain Maillet-Guy, *Le Chemin de la Perfection ou le Curé d'Ars conduisant le Chrétien au Ciel*, 1re partie, l'Oraison. Lyon, A. Nouvellet.

CHAPTER V

ON THE TREATMENT OF NEUROSIS

I. Psychotherapy.

In spite of the high importance of the matter, we can here only set down the most general advice on the treatment of nerve patients. A closer and more detailed study would carry us far beyond the limits of a small volume.

In nervous diseases it is not sufficient only to deal with the bodily organism. The disorders affecting the organism are in great measure caused, or at all events aggravated, by the derangement of the mental (psychic) functions, and chiefly by errors of judgment, caprice, and stubbornness of will, by lack of control over the imagination, by the domination and strength of passions. It is therefore of absolute necessity for complete cure to aim at an adjustment of the psychical or mental functions. The judgment must be corrected, the will must be trained to become energetic and active in restraining the imagination and keeping the passions within reasonable bounds. The treatment which has all this for its object is termed "psychotherapy."

There is no need here to dwell at length upon its

importance. The influence of the moral or spiritual part of human nature on the physical has long been recognized as an established fact.

In nervous maladies, the soul has lost something of the control which it normally exercises on the body and its operations through the senses. Psychotherapy undertakes to restore the lost power, not by a stroke of the magic wand, but by means of patient and persevering efforts it leads a person on little by little to regain self-control, and to become as far as possible master of himself once more.

In the treatment of neurosis, and of hysteria[1] in particular, psychotherapy holds an important place. It may be imagined that the system is very complicated, and one to be practised only by advanced scientists; whereas it is a perfectly natural exercise that the least learned make use of without recognizing it, because it responds to a need of the soul which is constantly subject to the miseries of life, and has need of a treatment proportioned to its nature and aspirations.

As the soul is trammelled in a certain sense by the bodily organs to which it is intimately united, and which it should be able to govern, it naturally experiences all their shocks, depressions, and sufferings, until the soul would seem almost to become the slave of the body. Hence, if the soul is to hold the supremacy, it must be able to react against such influences. Body and soul are united to form one personality. " In the soul is the basis and

[1] Where no special mention is made of hysteria, our remarks apply to every kind of neurosis.

union of all that is in man."[1] Consequently it is not difficult to realize what an influence the soul possesses over the body and the power it may exert to rule the organism and its functions.

Since the soul cannot draw from the body the necessary force to give free action to its superior faculties, and thus lead the lower faculties in its own way, it must be able to find in itself that power of the higher order. The soul must be treated separately. The good effects that will thence be obtained may then be applied to the service of the body with a view to restoring and maintaining its former strength. This is the treatment that can be easily understood without any intellectual training. The following letter of a French peasant will exemplify this. He writes to his parents:

"After six months' absence, it is a great pleasure

[1] Aristotle, *On the Soul*, l. 1. Most authors who have treated of the relation between the physical and moral states have usually contented themselves with an enumeration of facts which bear upon the matter. Bossuet, in his *Traité de la Connaissance de Dieu et de Soi-même*, speaks at some length on the union of soul and body (chap. iii.); but he does not go farther than to state that "soul and body form but one natural whole, and between them there exists a perfect and necessary communication." He does no more than affirm the existence of this union. Of its explanation he declares that "it is difficult and perhaps impossible for the human mind to penetrate the secret." He expresses with eloquence the mutual action of body and soul where he speaks of the "soul immersed in the body of which it feels every suffering so intimately," etc. (Sermon on Death). In the above-mentioned work may be found a description of facts which show how the soul is subjected by sensations to corporal influence, and how by the will the soul governs the body as something intimately united with it, though through the body it receives the most acute pleasures or pains. *Cf. L'Âme Humaine, Existence et Nature*, par le R. P. Coconnier, Dominicain. Paris, Perrin.

for me to be able to let you know that my health is improving every day. It has cost me both courage and perseverance to attain the end. I assure you I often found myself in the midst of sadness and discouragement. If I had not felt the effect of some of the best qualities of religion which I found flourishing in Bavaria, and which morally impressed me, I should have given myself over to despair, and I know not what might have become of me.

"In following out the mode of life here one need be neither rich, handsome, nor educated to spend a happy time. The people are happier than our millionaires, because they have no ambitions. As long as they can earn their daily bread they are content. They do not make for themselves all sorts of useless needs, and they do not require to lay out so much money as we do; and yet they are a strong and healthy people. During the week they work with a will, but their Sundays are given over to the Church services and some amusements. Their observance of the commandments of God and the Church gives a beauty to all their life. Their deportment, cheerful manners, and gentle aspect show that they are contented with their lot, that they enjoy peace of mind because they have a clear conscience. You should also see how they love and respect priests and religious. . . . These good people have a real friend in their curé—a trusty and faithful friend—with whom they share all their joys and sorrows, for they know that he, better than anyone else, can console them when they are in distress. After the Sunday services he must go

with them to the inn to take refreshment with them, and have a game at cards or billiards. In the inns here you always find a cross and a holy-water stoup. I am told it is the same all through Bavaria. The customs of the people are quite patriarchal. On a wedding-day the newly-married couple go with the whole party to the cemetery to pray for their deceased relatives.

"With us it is very different, where impiety reigns and causes a diminution of the population, introduces all kinds of vices and shame—murders, suicides, theft, drunkenness, and immorality.

"I can speak of all this from experience, because I spent my youth in disorder and sickness, having nothing in my mind but to enjoy this life; and I have reaped all sorts of evils. I assure you that now I thank God for having given me the idea of coming to Wörishofen, where I am gradually regaining health of body, after having healed my conscience. I feel myself well rid of all those abominations which we were accustomed to lay to the charge of religion, priest, and monk, and I fully understand now that nothing in all the world can make a man happier than the accomplishment of his duty and avoiding evil and doing good. The result is felt not by the soul alone, but by the body also. I have proof of it every day, and I am not by any means the only one here. There is a French Dominican here who gives his attention to the sick. I spoke to him one day about my treatment, and he seemed surprised, and asked me if I had found it out for myself. He calls the method that I have been following *psychotherapy*, and tells me the word is

from the Greek, meaning treatment of the soul" (ψυχή, soul; θεραπεία, treatment).

In the case of patients who are not intelligent or instructed, or are too weak to put forth the necessary effort to follow a conversation, one is obliged to make use of concrete examples proportioned to their state.

A young Swabian who was a victim of severe nervous weakness came to feel a sort of disgust of life (*tædium vitæ*)—a not unusual phase of neurosis. His mind was so preoccupied that he could not bring himself to fix his attention on any subject suggested to him, nor follow the simplest process of reasoning. It was utterly impossible to make him see the futility of all his apprehensions, which at times carried him to the verge of despair, and the consequent danger of allowing his mind to be taken up with these thoughts. After trying all arguments, I said to him one day: "Suppose one of these people bathing here rushed up to you and said: 'Be careful; a viper has just crawled under your chair,' would you not be afraid?" "Certainly," he said. "And yet there is no viper there, and the practical joker would be amused at having succeeded in startling you and keeping you in terror until you were convinced that there was no viper there, or until you had left the place. It might even be that, in spite of the absence of all danger, you might remain for a long time under the false impression created. The shock produced on the nervous system would continue until your will had turned your attention into some other channel. Suppose, on the other hand, that there really was a viper there, would you run and handle it or play

with it ?" "Decidedly not !" "Very well, then; treat all those fears that obsess you and weaken you in the same way. All these are leading you into error, and make you take illusions for realities. Turn your thoughts away from the seriousness, the causes, the consequences, of your malady, and, above all, from your tragic way of viewing the future, which is not ours at all to deal with, and concerning which you have no more reason to trouble yourself than persons in the best of health and spirits. You are playing with terrible phantoms and fears. You are in as much danger as the thoughtless child who fondles a serpent, and, like the child, you do not even suspect the danger. Be rather like a child who, not knowing its danger, allows itself to be guided by its mother. Obey those who have received from God the right and duty of directing you—namely, the physician and your director. These will be able by their knowledge and care to guide you to the state you desire. Give them your confidence, and you may rest assured as to the good result. Let me therefore impress upon you not to play with serpents, for they will injure you as long as you give them your attention. All treatment will be rendered useless till you do this, and you will infallibly draw nearer to complete ruin. Do you not see it yourself after the sad experience that you have every day ? Why then do you want to renew this experience while the result is ever the same ? On the other hand, you can easily prove for yourself that only the obedient patient gets over his trouble. There is no lack of examples here."

A simple method of this or of a similar nature always produces better results with this class of patient than any lengthy reasoning or psychological dissertation. The youth above mentioned did not fail to give a good account of himself. "Whenever I get these troubles," he told me on more than one occasion, "I think of the viper, and say to myself: 'There it is; I must get out of its way.'" By dint of *persistent* struggling with himself at very short intervals, he succeeded in getting the better of his affliction and all his fears. But it must be owned it took a long time, and required much patience, both from him and others. One had constantly to repeat the same thing to him and keep him up to the struggle and to constancy. I had told him to come and see me every day, and even several times in the day if he thought it necessary. He availed himself of the permission, and it certainly was a condition of his success. These poor sufferers need to be raised in hope and spirit at almost every moment. If many do not improve, it is often because they lack this guidance and moral support. Failing these, they lead a painful existence—perhaps a life of despair, and the evil continues or grows worse in spite of all other treatment and care lavished on them. We may add here, as it so often occurs in nervous cases, that the young man was accustomed to view his sufferings as the natural outcome of his former life — a well-deserved punishment of faults so serious and numerous that they were beyond pardon. From his own account it would seem that his faults were in every sense worse than those of

any other human being. The quoting of similar cases was not sufficient to disabuse him of this notion. Hence there would seem to be no remission for him except by a miracle, which God would assuredly not permit on his behalf. He was persuaded that treatment of every kind—physical, moral, or religious—could have no effect in his case. He had proof of it day after day whilst he experienced that his case became worse instead of better, and he was constantly threatened with madness—in fact, he had been told that his mind was already deranged. Before him he could see only a general break-up—material, physical, intellectual, and moral—misery in its worst form, complete and intense. But one escape was left open to him—suicide and death—and the thought of this haunted him perpetually.

In another case the patient assured me that his one desire was to be buried deep enough to find the repose he had sought for many years, and to be freed from his horrible sufferings.

If one speaks of God and of the reward of afflictions, most patients of this class will answer: "How can God dwell with a soul that knows no respite from the assaults of the most loathsome temptations, with a soul that is overrun with them, saturated with them to such a degree that it can occupy itself with nothing else? Amidst such filth there can be no place for God. I feel I have exhausted all the graces I ever received. And if God accords only a certain measure of grace, when this is used up, one receives no more, because a man only becomes the more unworthy by the abuse of graces

already bestowed. This is my case. How can you tell me anything different? Do not I know better than anyone what I have done, what happens within me, and consequently what awaits me in this life and in the next?" Such is the language of these despairing souls.

A state of this kind is often so complex that it baffles all attempts at analysis. And here we have a strong reason to believe that neurotic patients cannot be correctly classified, and never will be—at least, with any degree of exactitude and certainty. Dr. Bonnaymé writes with reason on this point: "After witnessing the peculiarities of victims of neurasthenia and hysteria, I have come to think that these affections are beyond the reach of our science. . . . I have had proof that these patients often suffer atrociously. Their line of reasoning is usually this: 'I experience the most painful sensations. It is all very well for you to bring your evidence that all my organs are in perfectly good condition, and it is not possible for me to suffer without lesion of some kind. I know better than anyone what I feel.' We can only conclude that the impressions are mistaken, but that the patient is really affected by them. It is an antinomy that we must accept, though it seems opposed to reason and science."[1]

In all treatment, physical or psychical, it is very necessary to look into the causes and degree of the malady; to take into account temperament, age, education, intelligence, profession, surround-

[1] *Considérations sur le Traitment des Névroses*, par le Dr. Bonnaymé de Lyon.

ings, former life, etc. These are all so many factors that influence more or less the physical or mental state. Both the physician and those in charge of the patient must reckon with all these points if they wish to attain any really good result.

Dr. Dubois teaches that in hysteria the whole evil arises from mental representation. "The hysterical person is like an actress," he says, "who, losing her head, plays her part under the persuasion that she is in real life. She needs to be shaken out of this state; her mistake must be shown to her, just as one would prevent the actress from plunging the dagger into her own breast. But the call back to reality must be done by *gentle firmness*."[1]

The one important object must be to lead the patient back to the normal state of life by every means that may be effective, but chiefly through *obedience*. But obedience must be based upon reason. It is to the reason and intelligence of the patient that appeal must be made, for "reason," as St. Thomas says, "is the rule and measure of our actions."[2] In the moral order it governs the passions and applies them to the service of God. Man can never be regarded as a machine driven by material force, nor as an animal led by blind instinct. Nor can we command a patient—particularly a nervous one—like an officer commands his raw recruits. It is essential to know how to arouse the interest of a patient and win him over to his own cause, by setting before him as the object of his aspirations and endeavours the glory of God, the

[1] Leçon xxiv. [2] I. 2, *Q.* 90, *A.* I.

welfare of his soul, and, as a natural consequence, the recovery of his health.

The ambition to attain so high an ideal will render the will pliable under obedience, and enduring enough to carry through the struggle unto the victory.

Often enough the faculties of the patient are sluggish, dull, and torpid. They are in a latent condition, like the life-germ in the seed or the spark in the flint. But the faculties are there. And whoever undertakes the treatment has to bring them from this potential state into activity, and in doing so use all possible care not to quench the smoking flax,[1] but to utilize every spark of energy to make the patient obey. Thus all his good-will, his slightest efforts, even his smallest good wishes, must be turned to account by proper direction, and without discouragement one must hope to succeed to-morrow where one has failed to-day.

Obedience is not always easy. Even persons in good health at times find its practice most difficult, especially when they have not been trained to the supernatural view of life, and modern education certainly offers but little help in overcoming the hardship. Père Monsabré, reflecting on the pain that we feel in submitting to authority, even when we have the good sense to see the necessity of it, says: "Why is this? It is because we only see in any given case the side that is painful to nature, which is jealous of yielding its independence. It is because we do not allow our mental vision to extend far enough. We do not look beyond the

[1] Isa. xlii. 3.

communicated authority of the creature to the chief and sovereign authority of the Creator. Creatures are a sort of vesture which God puts on in order to come near us, or an instrument which He uses to enable us to hear His voice."[1]

Doctors, priests, and those in charge of the sick, need much of the spirit of the missionary. Their nervous patients need converting as much as the heathen or the sinner, and consequently the method of cure might well be inspired with something of the spirit of the great workers for souls—the saints and martyrs.

They should make every effort to get the patients to realize that it is their own interest—supernatural as well as natural—that is at stake, and insist on the need of their co-operation to obtain the desired result. And whilst they exercise the patience and devotedness of Apostles, they should also imitate their spirit of faith, prayer, and unselfishness, that God may bless their labours on behalf of the sick. "For it is God Who worketh in us both to will and to accomplish."[2] The patients themselves will not fail to be impressed by such methods, and perhaps will be won over and "converted" by this manner of treating them.

A treatment of this kind, into which so much of the supernatural enters, is hardly likely to find much favour in these days, and may, perhaps, cause a good many doctors and patients to smile with contempt at the suggestion. Still, the annals of medical science can testify that the principle was once acknowledged and practised with profit.

[1] *La Prière Divine*, chap. viii. 3.　　[2] Phil. ii. 13.

The means here sketched out will usually succeed in obtaining that obedience which we have said is so necessary. It will only be temporary and superficial if produced in any other way. The patient will perhaps give in, so as to avoid being importuned. But he will then do all he can to escape supervision and control, because he will not have confidence enough to obey whole-heartedly.

At the same time, I do not wish to claim that the suggested manner of treatment will be always successful. There is a class of patients who will rebel directly against the method. Others probably may take advantage of it. And such persons are so difficult to manage that they end by being insupportable to themselves and all who have to deal with them. In such cases severity is often the only remedy. Many will admit this themselves and say: " With me you must only be severe and hard; it is the only way to make me obey." With such natures, which, though they are the exceptions, are numerous enough, it is necessary to adopt an attitude of authority and speak firmly and directly in a manner that admits of no escape or retort. But, I repeat, this should only be done when the more gentle method has failed.

By far the greater number of patients are quite aware of their unreasonable conduct. But whilst some acknowledge and deplore their peculiarities with commendable frankness and simplicity, others, especially sufferers from hysteria, are defiant and impertinent, cynical or proud, and contradict or excuse the charges brought against them. To find them out in falsehood or pretence is only to incur

their contempt. Thus such patients live in a world of their own, and are too much wrapped up in themselves to pay any heed to advice dictated by even long experience and observation of cases of the same sort. If you try to convince them, you will often get as answer: "Yes, you must be right; priests and doctors are infallible, but they do me no good." If they do not express themselves in these terms, their general attitude shows that this is their frame of mind. The only explanation of their illness that can satisfy them is their own, and they fail to see that they claim exemption from error for themselves in spite of the absurd or painful results of their conduct, which are often as serious for others as well as for themselves. It never occurs to them that they may be mistaken, and will defend themselves by all sorts of lies, excuses, and pleadings. Family and friends—if they have any—are of no account. Conscience for them is only the impression or caprice of the moment. As for consulting a director, they would scorn to be treated like children—they think themselves old enough and intelligent enough to look after themselves.

Then there is a class of patients who recognize their faults with candour, but in a way that shows they have no will to change. In the course of conversation a lady said to me once: "I know that I am thoroughly disagreeable and exacting at times; but what is to be done? I can't help myself." I ventured to inquire how her husband fared with such conduct. "Oh," was the answer, "I know he is not always happy. But he resigns himself to it, and never opposes me in any way. That is the

only method to adopt with me. Besides, he is not without some faults himself."

"And what," I asked, "will become of your children if you bring them up in such a way?" "They are very good and clever," she replied, "and do everything I want. With regard to the future, after all, am I not to have the first consideration?"

The good lady did not see that it was she who was obeying her children and giving in to their every caprice. Her love for her children was solely for herself, and that was the end she had in view in trying to win their affection. The trouble often begins in this way: The patient is over-jealous of the children's attention, and later they prove that they, too, are victims of nervous trouble, caused by their bad training. If they break down, the unforeseeing parent will pose as a victim of trouble, and will blame everybody and everything except herself. The responsibility of parents is not small in such cases, especially when they have been warned by competent and experienced men. The ideal of these unfortunate neurotics is thus not merely unpractical, it is both senseless and criminal. Especially at the outset of an attack an unbending firmness must be adopted with the sufferer, and this firmness must be of such a nature as to inspire a salutary fear. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."[1] At the same time, his fear must be of such a kind as to impress him with the impossibility of being led by his own will, and the danger of evading authority even in the smallest

[1] Ps. cx. 10.

matters. The secret of all success is to be found in this, and it should never be lost sight of.

It will be found, of course, that persons of very shallow and narrow views, of reserved and stubborn disposition,[1] of proud and pretentious instincts, especially if spoiled by their training, will prove restive under constraint, and very hard to lead. But, on the other hand, persons with better qualities, as a wider intelligence, upright character, frankness, and gentleness, will respond much more easily to the trouble taken with them.

Further, all correspondence and relationship with persons who are liable to exert an evil influence must be stopped and forbidden—the more completely the better. Sometimes, even with the best intentions, a false system of treatment suggested from another source will counteract any good result that might have been attained. This observation is all the more important in the case of relatives or friends, who, knowingly or not, may have been the occasion of the development of the evil.

If one yields to the complaints or demands of patients in this matter through ill-founded pity, it will soon be discovered that the concession will only increase the affliction. Neurotic persons, moreover, will be found to be adepts at escaping from supervision and restraint. They are extremely clever at inventing stratagems to carry their wishes into effect, and unless one knows how to guard

[1] St. Francis de Sales says that the greatest enemies of human society are those "that are stubborn, obstinate, and given to contradiction; these are the pests of company, the scourge of society, and the sowers of strife" (Monseigneur Camus, *L'Esprit de St. François de Sales*, 2[me] partie, chap. l.).

against all this, they will soon become an intolerable burden to those who have charge over them. In compassing their ends they remind one of a machine which is set going at a high speed, and overturns and destroys everything that comes in its way, if it be not itself stopped, injured, or destroyed by some opposing force.

Again, it must be recognized that nervous complaints are contagious, and may often bring about surprises which are the more disagreeable as they were never suspected. Besides, neurosis is a dangerous state which the tempter may avail himself of to lead souls into every kind of extravagance and excess.

In spite of the capital importance of obedience, all those who have any authority over patients must exercise extreme prudence in their method of issuing commands. For example, in the case of religious, it would be fatal to impose an order *under holy obedience*. Discretion must suggest the manner of proportioning all commands to the state of the patient. Wherever determined resistance may be expected, it would be unwise to give an injunction at all, or it might happen that a bad impression would be created in the mind of the patient by material disobedience when he was practically unable to control himself sufficiently to carry out the command. It would be worse still in such cases to accompany the command with a menace as to the evil consequences of non-compliance, because thence would inevitably arise trouble and disquiet and scruples which would tend to augment the evil and perhaps lead to despair.

It is easy enough to give an order, but it is an art not easily acquired to give it in such a manner that it may not appear burdensome or prove a shock to the subject. We said above that authority must inspire a kind of fear, but it must also be able to create *confidence*, which, though unfortunately much neglected, is worth a whole pharmacopœia in its remedial effects. Consequently the superior must always be influenced by kindness. *Fear* and *kindness* are the two levers for his work.[1] Kindness alone would not suffice, because it would lead to abuses, and would be sterile, or even harmful. Fear alone would only produce distrust, aversion and revolt. The two forces prudently combined so that kindness predominates, nothing can resist. To reach the heart of another we must use a force that comes from our own heart.[2]

It may be said that if psychotherapy is the basis of the correct treatment of neurosis, kindness is the basis of psychotherapy. It holds the place of

[1] Tracing out the duties of superiors, St. Austin, in his rule, insists on the conduct to be followed with souls that are disturbed, cowardly, or weak. Some require reproof, and, when needful, a salutary correction. Others need consolation, encouragement, and notice. All must be treated with affectionate and considerate patience. Love and fear have to play their part in the government of religious, and both are of necessity. But the holy Doctor, experienced psychologist and gifted with prudence as he was, adds: "It is better for the superior to be loved than feared." These are excellent counsels of psychotherapy, applicable as they are not merely to various normal characters and temperaments, but also to the nervous and scrupulous subjects that have to be directed.

[2] St. Francis de Sales observes that if salt be placed on food by the handful, the food is too disagreeable to eat; whereas a reasonable quantity of salt or sugar renders a dish more palatable (*Entretien* iv.).

humility amongst the virtues; it is the foundation, and as there is no real virtue without humility, neither is there any system of treatment of these ailments without kindness. If this point be thoroughly grasped, it is impossible not to attain satisfactory results. When a patient sees that he is commanded by one who feels giving the order as much as he does in carrying it out, he will soon come to see that the command is prompted by duty and affection, and he will exert himself not to give further pain to his superiors or to offend God.

St. Francis de Sales says in his characteristic manner: "Those that are in charge of others, and are required by their position to correct the faulty, will sometimes have to speak truths that are not easy of digestion. In these cases they must cook them at the ardent fire of charity and kindness, so that all harshness may be taken from them. Otherwise they will be providing sour fruit which will cause pains rather than good solid nourishment."[1]

II. Physical Treatment.

Important and necessary as the above points are, ordinarily speaking they would not alone be sufficient to re-establish the true balance of the faculties of the soul in their external functions. It is always useful, and often quite indispensable, to call in to the aid of psychotherapy certain physical agents which directly exert a beneficial effect upon the body and the senses, but indirectly benefit also the disposition of the mind.

[1] *Op. cit.*, 2^{me} partie, chap. viii.

In not a few cases nervous ailments are due to purely physical troubles, which must be treated with remedies of the same order. Thus physical treatment must be adopted to deal with such phases of illness as violent headaches, difficulties of digestion, imperfect circulation, insomnia, and suchlike.

The resources of physiotherapy, as this branch of treatment is called, are varied, and the chief, hydrotherapy (treatment by water), has for a long time held a prominent place in dealing with nervous diseases. According to the symptoms, applications—tonic, sedative, or modifying the functions of circulation and nutrition—are prescribed. The treatment is a delicate one, and must be indicated by the physician, since, besides the method of application, strict account must be taken of the temperature, duration, and in some cases pressure, of the water.

Mention must be made in passing of the care required with regard to food. It is a common mistake to make too great a use of meat. Under pretext of strengthening patients, they are fed up with meats or extracts of meat, and in many cases it is rather the malady that gains strength by overtaxing the digestive system, which perhaps is already sluggish and inactive. To eat slowly, to drink very little during meals, to abstain from meat altogether in the evening, and to take no stimulant, may be taken as general rules for all nervous subjects. Many require rest after meals, especially those suffering from general debility (asthenia), but they should not allow themselves to sleep.

Except in case of exceptional gravity, regular occupation is strongly to be recommended. With hysterical patients it is indispensable that every moment should be mapped out for them. The reason of this is to provide the imagination with matter to occupy itself with, so that it may not wander off into such subjects as would neutralize all attempts at cure. It also has the benefit of lessening the danger of forming little companies and cliques, which often disturb the peace. When possible, it is advisable to provide manual work in the open air. Gardening is most useful for this purpose, as also wood-sawing,[1] or games like tennis and gymnastic exercise.

At the beginning especially the simplest regular treatment will prove to be the most effectual. It must always be borne in mind that nervous people are both physically and morally very sensitive (*sont des écorchés vifs*), and therefore have need of very careful management. "We cannot describe the various degrees of susceptibility of the nervous system arising from an excessive sensitiveness," writes Dr. Burlureaux. Patients should be warned, however, against thinking that the rapidity or efficacy of cure is in proportion to the number of things they undertake. It is rather better to undertake too little than too much.

According to each one's state it is well to provide a certain time for intellectual work, though manual work should be regarded as of more importance,

[1] It would not, however, be wise to undertake such exercise as would give any shock to the nerves, as dangerous effects, especially to the brain, might soon be the consequence.

particularly at the beginning of the treatment. In both cases, however, care must be taken not to incur the sensation of painful fatigue, which would be sufficient proof of excess. The same is to be said also of walking and all exercise. Then, again, all sudden changes should be avoided in the change of occupation.

Success will depend largely on the choice, amount, and variety of the treatment prescribed by the physician, or rather it should be said on the prudent combination of the physical and moral treatment. One is the complement of the other. It follows, therefore, that the patients must not think of being their own doctors.

Probably, it will be discovered that these amateur workers do not produce a great deal. But those in charge of them must endeavour to show satisfaction, so as not to discourage them in their attempts to make themselves useful. Some material loss may well be incurred if thereby we can save our patients from loss of health or mind, or perhaps both together.

Sometimes difficulty will be found in setting the work. Patients will object their lack of taste or ability or strength. One will show no good-will at all, another will be so obsessed with his own thoughts that all mental application will be painful to him. This is where the very delicate rôle of the director must come in, especially in this latter case. He must show his patient how wrong his ideas are and how little importance is to be placed upon his preconceived notions. The greater the attention expended upon an idea the stronger it becomes, so

that the only remedy is to try and deflect the attention to other objects.

Little by little he must teach his patient to dissociate his ideas and actions, and induce him to perform acts contrary to his false ideas. At the same time the director must suggest fresh ideas that may serve to guide the patient, and serve to provide him with a fresh ideal that may absorb the attention and gradually arouse dormant will-power. This method of treatment will produce a threefold effect. First, it will afford a remedy to that mental misery which characterizes most of these states. It will, secondly, assist in establishing the mental synthesis that has been so disorganized. It will banish those representations of the mind which lie at the root of all the symptoms of these diseases.

We may inquire now what are the conditions for success in the treatment of all kinds of neurosis. The first and most necessary is a change from the usual surroundings of the patient—a measure that in many cases is opposed for one reason or another. Some families will not have their "dear afflicted ones" removed from them, and some patients will not leave their "dear relatives," who have provided a most excellent medical man, and who can give greater attention to them than they are likely to find anywhere else. This is a sad illusion, which of itself proves how much ignorance exists of the whole matter of these maladies. In all these cases sacrifices must be undergone, and of two evils it is better to summon up courage to choose the lesser.

On consideration, this course should not be re-

garded as too severe. When the patient's illness has developed in the surroundings of his family, all about him—persons, places, and objects—must needs have some effect upon him connected with his malady. His chances of recovery are considerably lessened if he remain amongst surroundings that perhaps have been the origin of all his trouble. Hence responsibility rests with his relatives, and for them there exists a strict and urgent duty in the matter.

It is almost essential for nervous cases to be transferred from their accustomed surroundings to live a completely new life, free from all labour and anxiety, and under the immediate direction of competent and conscientious physicians. Both patient and friends must be ready to take advice in this matter, which is sometimes a delicate one, but of very serious consequence.

Nor must it be suspected that these ideas are inspired by preference for a particular system of treatment. Some persons are liable to suppose this when advice is offered them that runs counter to all that they thought and practised up to the present. We speak here merely in the cause of truth, and consider that it is a matter of conscientious duty towards nervous patients. No better proof could be indicated, if such were needed, than the numbers of cases treated in the homes of the afflicted, and at great expense, with but small result.

These observations apply, of course, only to serious cases of long standing. We do not refer to mere fatigue, or such attacks as may have come on suddenly through overstrain, sorrow or anxiety.

In such cases there is not the same need of complete change.

It is of necessity, then, that cases be isolated from their usual surroundings, and placed in such conditions that they may have that guidance and supervision which is so essential for them. They need to be watched as closely as possible, even in the smallest details of their lives, as in small matters the physician often finds a clue as to the nature of the treatment to adopt with them. Moreover, these cases require special nurses. Besides the knowledge, intelligence, and devotedness required of every nurse, whether religious or lay, a special course of study and training should have prepared the nurse who has to manage patients with nerve troubles.[1]

We repeat, it is our opinion that the want of success with many cases is simply attributable to

[1] Every nurse who feels the importance of her duty will be careful to regulate her work according as the state of the patient requires, not according to a hard-and-fast written rule, and still less according to her personal ideas and fancies.

St. Vincent de Paul, the great model of charity, wished that his nuns should give up everything for the poor if necessary—any point of rule, even prayer and Mass—because, as he was wont to say, this was only leaving God for God. "What a consolation," he used to say, "for a Sister of Charity to feel and say to herself: Instead of praying or reading, I am going to look after the poor patient whose need is urgent, and I know that God will be pleased with my action. With this thought a sister may go quite cheerfully wherever God shall call her" (Abbé Maynard, *Vertus et Doctrine de S. V. de P.*, chap. x. Paris, Tégui).

Tauler says that, though a person should be raised in contemplation, like St. Peter or St. Paul, he should be willing to interrupt his prayer of contemplation if a poor sufferer wanted him to prepare some refreshment or to render any other service.

the unfavourable conditions in which patients are placed, even when the treatment might intrinsically be all that could be desired.

These remarks claim the special attention of physicians and priests. Both should take the trouble to obtain the requisite information to deal with these illnesses, and for this they must be versed in philosophy, and especially psychology. The best psychologists will prove to be the best to treat such cases if they allow themselves also to be guided by kindness.

III. Exercises of Piety.

In nervous affections the moral or religious attitude of mind often counts for a great deal. Persons who have the faith will naturally strive to keep up their practices of piety, even when suffering makes it hard and wellnigh impossible to do so. Often, indeed, the patients of whom we speak here believe, unfortunately, that their only hope of salvation is to be found in this, and they will not be persuaded to the contrary. They think that all their leisure time should be spent in devotional works, when the mind has particular need of calm and repose. Some are persuaded they can do no good for themselves because they are not able to pray as they used to do. In some instances they will not believe that they are ill, and then there is little hope of showing them that their difficulty comes from the abnormal state of the nervous system. The cleverest and most reasonable of counsels will have no weight with them. They persist in attempting to do all that

they have been accustomed to do, or even try to do more, forgetting that "all things have their season."[1] "There is a time for suffering and a time for praying," says St. Francis de Sales. "We do not look for fruit on the trees in spring or winter. One would need a body of iron to exert activity whilst suffering or to submit to suffering whilst we have to be at work.[2] When God calls upon us to suffer, He exempts us from action."[3]

Then there are others who might well fulfil all their religious duties, but give them up altogether, under the pretext that they never were any the better, but perhaps worse, for faithfully carrying them out.

The practices which were a support to them in their troubles a few days ago now seem to tire them, to cause them disgust and weariness. Instead of peace they experience disquiet; their former fervour has degenerated into tepidity; where before they had zeal they now feel indifference, discouragement, torpor; instead of consolation and spiritual sweetness they now suffer dryness, trouble, disgust, and scruples, with all the anxieties and hopelessness that these bring in their train.

St. Theresa was well acquainted with such cases, and she is certainly not to be accused of any tepidity or laxity. She writes thus of them: "Such persons must not be allowed to pray too often, and the duration of their ordinary prayer-time should be

[1] Eccles. iii. 1. [2] Job vi. 12.

[3] Mgr. Camus, *op. cit.*, part 3, chap. lv. This great saint said that an ounce of pain was worth a pound of action, provided it was pain sent by God without our own choice (*ibid.*, chap. li.).

curtailed, as it is harmful for them to protract the exercise in their case. Most of these subjects have very weak imaginations, and they would only occupy their time with vain and foolish ideas."[1]

St. Theresa's counsels are most excellent for ordinary cases, but are not sufficient in graver ones. So complex and varied are these states that it is impossible to lay down precise and special rules; but there are certain general principles that are gathered from experience. Then, as we said when speaking of scruples, a competent confessor or director should be chosen and obeyed implicitly in each particular case.

In detail the advice to be given must vary according to the state and mode of life, intellectual and religious training, and, above all, according to the intensity of the malady, very much as we have already indicated for mental and manual occupation.

Patients should not force themselves to make meditations on account of the fatigue of the mind which would ensue, and for the other reasons given by St. Theresa. They should refrain from assisting at several Masses a day, and from making long visits in different churches and chapels. A few minutes of prayer or adoration at a time should suffice, because it must be remembered that the value of practices of piety is not to be measured by their duration or variety, but by the degree of the love of God and submission to His will with which they are performed. "We must love prayer," says St. Francis de Sales, "but we must love it for the love of God. And when we love it in this

[1] *Book of the Foundations*, chap. vii.

way we shall not desire more of it than God wishes to grant us, and God does not wish us to have more than obedience permits."[1]

In a state of anguish the best method of prayer is that indicated by Our Lord in His cruel agony in the Garden of Olives. When His soul was sorrowful even unto death, He prayed: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."[2] If one should do nothing during the whole of prayer-time but make this one act of *conformity to the will of God* in ever so few words, there can be no doubt that the prayer would be most holy and useful.[3] One can pray thus, as the "little Sister" Theresa of the Infant Jesus, who was deprived of movement by the sickness that was at length to put an end to her exile. One night the infirmarian found her with her hands joined and her eyes turned towards heaven. "What are you doing?" she asked. "You must try to sleep." "I cannot, Sister; I am suffering too much, and so I am praying." "And what do you say to Jesus?" "I say nothing; I love Him."[4]

Père Lacordaire spent entire hours of his last sickness with his eyes fixed upon the crucifix. "Are you praying?" someone asked him. "I am only looking upon Him," was his answer. The holy Curé of Ars, noticing a peasant spend long hours in the church, asked him what he used to say to

[1] *Op. cit.*, part i., chap. xxvi.
[2] Matt. xxvi. 39.
[3] P. Massoulié, O.P., *Traité de la véritable Oraison*, part iii., chap. ix.
[4] Life, written by herself, chap. xii.

Our Lord in all that time. "I say nothing," was the simple man's answer; "but I look up to Him and He looks at me."

The same blessed Curé d'Ars said once in his Catechism class: "If you find it impossible to pray, hide yourself behind your good angel and get him to pray in your stead." Some persons will not venture to go to Holy Communion under the pretext that, being unable to pray, they cannot prepare themselves for this great sacrament. They may rest assured that pain accepted from the hand of God, and prayer performed as we have said, constitute for them the very best preparation. God requires nothing more of them as long as they are in that state.

It is better for patients to remain seated at their prayer-time. It is too tiring to stand, and kneeling may have bad effects upon the circulation or the spine. There should be no prayers or pious readings immediately after meals—for at least an hour. Repose for body and mind is quite imperative at this time, and it cannot be taken better than lying down.

In the case of extreme fatigue, of anæmia, or nervous strain, no vocal prayer at all—even the *Ave Maria*—should be used. Even short prayers may then cause mental fatigue, and occasion real injury to health. Patients must in these cases restrict themselves to ejaculatory prayers, which may be considered to make up for all others.[1]

The author of the *Spiritual Combat* says that an aspiration, an ejaculatory prayer, a genuflexion, the least sign of respect for the Divine Majesty,

[1] St. Francis de Sales.

is of more value than all the world's treasures, and that each time a man mortifies himself in any way, the angels are ready to bring him a crown in reward for the victory he has won over himself (chap. xx.). "There is no action, however small, that, being referred to God, has not its merit and profit for the soul in proportion as it is performed with charity. Louis de Blois says that to place a little flower on the altar to honour God or to adorn the statue of a Saint with a right and pious intention merits a great reward."[1]

Hence these sufferers should be ready to embrace with humility this spiritual mortification, and train themselves to live a life of recollection in the presence of God, practising humility, charity, patience, meekness, *cheerfulness*, and above all self-abandonment into the hands of God.

According to St. Francis de Sales this resignation is "the virtue of virtues, the cream of charity, the sweet perfume of humility, the flower of patience, the fruit of perseverance, a virtue that is worthy of the practice of the most cherished children of God."[2]

Many a patient—lay and religious—comes to our institute with this advice from the confessor or superiors. With regard to your exercises of devotion, *do just what you are able*. It is just this freedom that troubles and disquiets them, because they are quite incapable themselves of deciding what they *are* able to do. They fear they do not do

[1] *Specul. Spirit.*, v. 3.

[2] Letter 12. "Ejaculatory prayers and aspirations," he says again, are really constant prayers, and the suffering of our ills is the greatest offering we can make to Him who saved us by suffering" (*ibid.*).

enough, or do it badly, and thereby offend against obedience; then they become upset, and, finally, scrupulous. It is clear that in these cases all religious exercises must be forbidden altogether.

It has been our experience that at first they are surprised, frightened, and scandalized—perhaps naturally so—at so radical and unexpected a measure. But they soon come to find that the assurance that they were under no obligations had a good effect upon the nervous system, and brought them both physical and moral comfort. Then gradually they came to recognize that as long as they were afflicted, God required nothing more from them. They would realize that they had only to render an account of their submissiveness in the new kind of life that had been imposed upon them, and that if there was any responsibility at all it fell upon him who commanded, and not on the one who was called upon to obey. They would accept the general principle that even though the Superior should be mistaken in giving his command, the subject could make no error in obeying, provided, of course, there were no question of things intrinsically evil. "Obey your prelates, and be subject to them. For they watch as being to render an account of your souls."[1]

On one occasion an Austrian nun wrote thus: "What at first I was so alarmed at has been the means of curing me. I must admit I really needed the dispensation which you procured for me." This nun would not accept any exemption from her rule when in her community. Whilst she was

[1] Heb. xiii. 17.

undergoing treatment a complete dispensation was obtained for her without her knowledge.

A religious stricken down with a nervous attack applied to her Superior General for a dispensation from the recitation of the office. She received the following reply, which she brought to us in great trouble of mind, asking what she ought to do: "With regard to your prayer," wrote the Superior, "I have always been of opinion that one can always pray as long as one is able to talk. Very often the tempter plays a greater part here than is commonly thought. In this matter it does not do to be too indulgent towards oneself. Pray but a little at a time—there are so many graces connected with the recitation of the office. . . ."

Without doubt, all the exercises of piety when performed well are meritorious, and draw down the blessings of heaven. The same must be said of fasts and penance and labour. But should we under such a pretext make the sick fast and work as the strong are able to do? It is plain that the principle would lead to an absurdity if applied with strict uniformity and without the necessary discretion. In the same way there is a vast difference between *praying* and *talking*. Prayer entails recollection, reflection, and mental effort—that is, the exercise required to fix the attention. All this produces fatigue, then probably *fear*—that terrible fear, of which we have already said so much. It is not the same with conversation—especially with women—and particularly if we include readings of an interesting nature that distract the mind without tiring it, and exciting scrupulous apprehensions, or the

trials of a perplexed conscience. In fact, we have spent many long years in the ministry and we have never yet known anyone make the accusation in confession or direction of having distractions or a want of recollection in speaking or reading. No one ever supposes himself obliged to regard these as either certain or doubtful faults.

The answer of the superior, otherwise doubtlessly well intentioned, betrays a lack of discernment and a pitiful ignorance of the state of the soul for which she was required to find a remedy. Judging from the above instance, she would seem to decide with a word or a stroke of the pen questions that are calculated to puzzle the most learned and experienced. In such cases why not refer the afflicted person to her confessor? Would not this seem to be the natural method and the one indicated by God? The case was the more to be deplored as the confessor of the Community is well known for his learning, piety, and prudence—the qualities that peculiarly fit him for the exercise of his ministry. In such instances it is the duty of superiors not to interpose their authority in matters pertaining to conscience, but to subordinate their judgment and advice to the enlightened direction of the ecclesiastical superiors, or of the confessor who has authority and the grace belonging to his state to aid him in guiding souls. In this way they would relieve themselves of a fearful responsibility and spare their subjects many and great trials.

The rules here laid down might seem somewhat crude, forced, or even childish to those who have no complete knowledge of the various morbid states of

nervous afflictions and the terrible consequences, physical and moral, arising from them. They are, however, laid down with a knowledge gained by very long experience and a most careful observation of thousands—without any exaggeration—thousands of cases. Considered in this light, the above rules may be declared of serious importance, and should be followed out to the letter by all neurotic or scrupulous patients.

To conclude, we would quote some very practical suggestions of St. Theresa on the "method to be followed with regard to persons subject to melancholy."

It should be first observed that, at the time when the Saint wrote, every kind of neurosis was included under the name of *melancholy*. The terms *hysteria*, *neurasthenia*, and suchlike did not yet exist. It is beyond doubt that St. Theresa is speaking here of hysteria and neuropathy. In any case, the advice of the Saint is remarkable, and applicable to both classes of affliction. We quote these directions the more willingly as they come from a "valiant woman," so well known for her strength of character, her science, and her sanctity, and we trust that women may be prepared to follow them out faithfully coming from such a source, when perhaps they might suspect them if they were given on medical authority.

St. Theresa writes: "We shall watch with extreme care so as not to receive any novice of melancholy character; but this disposition is so subtle that it eludes detection when it might be thought most likely that it could be detected. We shall dis-

cover later, when it is too late.[1] Melancholy has so many devices that one must study them and know them well to follow all its caprices if one would guide aright the persons that are afflicted and prevent them from causing harm to others. The chief effect of melancholy is to gain power over the reason, and consequently the soul finds itself in darkness. And in such a state to what lengths may not the passions go! Not to be able to use one's reason freely is already a sort of madness. It is true these victims of melancholy have not reached that limit, but their affliction causes much more suffering than even madness. And there is nothing so troublesome as to have to treat as reasonable beings those whose conduct can no longer be deemed reasonable.

"In order to govern them there is but the one method—viz., by fear. By their weeping and their pitiful complaints they hope at times to get their own way. And if they succeeded in this their

[1] If it were well understood what harm these persons are capable of causing in even fervent and well-disciplined communities, superiors would certainly be more severe in receiving them, and especially in admitting them to profession. Little by little, and without warning, these "invalids" spoil the very best spirit and sow the seeds of insubordination, disunion, and perhaps general disorder. When the evil first comes to notice, people will ask with wonderment: "Is it possible that So-and-so can have acted in such and such a manner?" But evidence will show that the evil is there and perhaps already beyond reparation.

Quite recently the Superioress of a large convent in Italy wrote: "I know of convents that have been ruined through one hysterical subject. God has favoured us by preserving us from this affliction up to the present, . . . but you should see how strict we are with regard to this point, and how well we try our postulants and novices."

trouble would be incurable, and one only would suffice to upset a whole community.

"At times the evil gets such sway over a person that it entirely stifles the reason. Then, of course, whatever extravagance the individual may commit will be no more sinful than if it were prompted by actual madness. But it is not the same with those whose minds are only weakened and who have intervals of clear judgment. For them there exists a very real danger. On this account it is necessary not to leave them the slightest freedom when the melancholy tries them most, lest in their more lucid intervals they may still seek to follow their own caprice. Observing these persons closely, one may soon discover that they have a very strong inclination to follow their own will, to say whatever comes into the mind, to pick out the faults of others and hide their own, and on all occasions to please themselves. Thus, what is to become of these unfortunate creatures who lack all interior principle of resistance and have such unregulated passions ever growing in strength, unless some firm and intelligent authority keep watch over them?

"I repeat, then, by all means possible, they must be constrained to submit. My experience has taught me often that herein is the only remedy. If words do not suffice to master them, recourse must be had to chastisement. . . ."

Amongst the chastisements that are to be dealt out to these persons, St. Theresa recommends seclusion. We venture to observe that this suggestion, though in keeping with the cloistral discipline of the time and intended to save the com-

munity from the disturbing influences of such subjects as we are speaking of, is no longer to be commended as a method of treatment. The reason is that its effects on a nervous state and on psychical dispositions that have to be regulated are not of the most successful. If it were merely a question of "isolation" the advice of the Saint might perhaps be correct, though after much learned discussion this question is not yet decided upon. Even a medical man—in spite of the certainty of his diagnosis—will not always be able to tell beforehand whether such and such a patient will benefit, for example, by the water cure. So he cannot tell till he has experimented whether a patient will do well by isolation.

At the same time, we must add that no one can blame St. Theresa for having recourse to those methods. The medical science of the time knew of no other treatment, and in acting thus she only conformed to the practice of her day. Before Pinel, persons mentally deranged were treated quite differently from the methods now in vogue. Would anyone therefore cast reproach upon the predecessors of the famous specialist?

St. Theresa continues: "It is the height of charity to adopt this severity with them. I cannot insist too strongly upon this means of dealing with patients, so important do I consider it. At times, I admit, they have no control over themselves, but often they have reason enough to be capable of sin, and then their state is very perilous. . . .

"I have observed that in presence of a person who can inspire fear, they know how to restrain

themselves. . . . I suspect that the demon tries to ruin many a soul by means of this melancholy. . . . If anyone in this danger should read these suggestions, I conjure her, in the name of God, to reflect that her eternal salvation may perhaps depend on her fidelity in putting them in practice.

"Without making it known to the sufferers, the superior must be as a real mother towards them, cultivating a lively compassion for them and adopting every means to cure them. She herself must act as a physician towards them and take all possible care of them in a malady which is more harmful than a disease threatening corporal life, inasmuch as this injures the spiritual life. Other diseases end with cure or with death, but this is seldom cured and seldom does anyone die of it.

"For my part I feel the deepest compassion for these sufferers, and so should all who live with them. They have a most bitter chalice to drink. Their interior sorrows, imaginations, and scruples, which they always regard as so many temptations, constitute a sort of continual death. Thus their life is a martyrdom, and their reward will be proportionately great in heaven. Performing their purgatory in this life they will have nothing to suffer in the next."[1]

A purely physical malady, however serious it may be, even to the extent of a mortal disease, is not *in itself* a hindrance to perfection. It acts as an obstacle to the practice of many virtues to a greater or less degree, or, it may be, even entirely; but the will may continue attached to the love of God, which is the bond of perfection, as St. Paul calls it.

[1] *Op. et loc cit.*

If the will accepts the material incapacity and physical sufferings as being, in its afflicted state, the means of perfection, then no essential loss is sustained.

In the maladies of nervous and scrupulous persons a certain moral element has to be taken into account as being, of its nature, harmful to the spiritual life. The balance of judgment in such subjects is upset by an overbearing imagination, which it is hard to keep in check. The will itself is much weakened and subject to many failings, as, for example, to a deplorable inconstancy which causes it to pass almost instantaneously from one extreme to another, and to plan resolutions of a contrary nature. (We suppose, of course, that the subjects we speak of retain a partial responsibility at least, and are able to perform a *human act*, in the theological sense of the term.) These afflictions of the reason and the will cause real harm to the spiritual state, which consists in the love of God and obedience to His Will, inasmuch as they are the sources of venial or even mortal sins and consequently of proportionate demerit. It is no less true of such sufferers that "their reward shall be great in heaven," and so much the greater, according as they combat generously and perseveringly for the love of God. Their merits will stand to their account, not the failure that accompanies this life.

CHAPTER VI

ON CHARITY AND INDULGENCE TOWARDS THE SICK

THE foregoing account of the pains and evil results of neurosis which holds such a wide sway in these times is calculated to excite the pity of all who are fortunate enough to escape the many phases and disasters of the malady.

And, indeed, it is quite necessary to appeal for sentiments of forbearance, respect even, and certainly always for charity on behalf of these stricken ones, about whom many have been seriously concerned in the past few years.

Every sufferer must be pitied. But those especially merit sympathy and pity who lack that strength of soul sufficient to render it effectively, as Bossuet expresses it, "mistress of the body which it animates." The soul that is thus shorn of some of its powers, so to speak, and laden with its heavy cross, turns for consolation, like every individual in sorrow, to those whom it expects to find able and ready to afford it solace. Often, probably more than is realized, the sufferer meets with coldness, incredulity, raillery, sarcasm, and even contempt, especially if the affliction is of long duration, as is likely to be the case with nervous troubles. "In

the battle of life," says Dr. Dubois, "as in the field of warfare the dead are interred with all respect and the wounded are carefully tended, but the lame who otherwise do not appear ill, but are ever complaining, cannot have attention paid to them."[1] People will often think they have done their duty towards them, when in their wisdom and philanthropy they declare them to be victims of imagination. The above-mentioned doctor says: "There are none whose sufferings are purely imagination, all are afflicted and deserve pity. But it is quite true that there are numbers of patients in whom the closest observation can detect no physical defect. A physician might well give them a medical certificate for life insurance, and yet it is a fact that for months or years, or it may be all their life through, they are undergoing a martyrdom of pain."[2]

Such is the language of every doctor who thoroughly appreciates the difficulties of neurosis, and such, too, must be the sentiment of every intelligent and charitable layman. Why is it that all do not take the view here expressed? "We are for the most part unhappy," Father Faber says, "because the world is an unkind world. But the world is only unkind for the lack of kindness in us units who compose it."[3]

It must be acknowledged that some sufferers are so badly treated by others, even by those whose bounden duty it is to succour them, that they end by

[1] *De l'Influence de l'Esprit sur le Corps.* Paris, Masson, 1902.
[2] *Op. cit.* [3] *Spiritual Conferences:* On Kindness.

believing that God also has deserted them. And this is one of the saddest and most dangerous of all temptations—tending as it does to loss of faith and perhaps suicide. "He that is well," says St. Bernard, "feels not another's pain, and he that has had food does not experience the pang of the hungry. As one sick person becomes like another, and as one suffers the hunger that afflicts his neighbour, in so much can they compassionate one another in their trials. To feel unhappy at the sorrows of another one must have felt them in oneself. In this way only can we read the state of our neighbour's soul in our own and discover how we may assist him."[1]

When we observe the lack of consideration shown towards neurotic patients, we can only hope for the honour of humanity that there would not be this lack of pity if the same afflictions proceeded from wounds or injuries that could be seen and treated in some material way. Hence a plea is here advanced for more pity towards those whose sufferings are not so easily dealt with. In spite of the decided advance of science, it sometimes happens that a patient may die of poison administered in medicine,[2] or that a person may be buried alive.[3] Knowledge is not infallible enough to obviate such cases. So should we beware of supposing that we can judge of the morbid effects of neurosis merely by external appearances. This can no more be done than can a blind man give a theory of colour. It does not

[1] St. Bernard, *De Gradibus Humilitatis*, chap. iii.

[2] Reference is here made to the use of poisons used in medicine, as strychnine, morphia, etc.

[3] *La Mort Réele et la Mort Apparente*, par le P. Ferreres, S.J. Paris, Beauchesne, 1906.

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require any special gift to recognize that neither reason nor study nor theoretical science are sufficient to deal effectively with matters that belong to the domain of experience.

Doctors and confessors may sometimes be wanting in consideration for patients. Those that have been afflicted by any form of neurosis themselves can realize the mental and physical horror of their condition. There may very naturally be mistakes in the general opinion formed regarding the nature and consequences of nervous afflictions. But it should be impressed upon all that these patients really do suffer.

" Nervous weakness," says Dr. Beard, " is found under an appearance of perfect health. Patients get very little sympathy on account of their irritability, the changeableness and various aspects of their symptoms. Sometimes they look well and show plenty of activity: their appearance is healthy, robust, and vigorous. It may even be that they grow stout, whilst their nervous trouble grows more serious. They are known to increase in weight whilst all trouble of the digestive organs changes to an affliction of the brain or the spine. These changes deceive everybody, including the doctor, and just when they need most sympathy they get the least. A doctor who once came to visit me happened to pass through the patient's waiting-room and remarked that all my patients looked like giants. As a matter of fact, I then had some serious cases of nervous prostration. It cannot be too often repeated: a man may be of robust constitution and yet his nervous system may be as

weak as that of an hysterical girl who is always on her sick bed."[1]

These patients find themselves driven almost to despair in their sufferings. Therefore it is an elementary duty of friends and relatives to offer them what aid they are capable of giving. "Long illnesses," says St. Francis de Sales, "are excellent schools of charity for those who attend these illnesses, as well as schools of loving patience for them that suffer. For the former stand at the foot of the Cross with Our Lady and St. John imitating their compassion, the others are upon the cross themselves partaking of Our Lord's Passion."[2]

From merely the natural standpoint it must doubtless be granted that many a sick person unconsciously does quite enough to alienate all sympathy. They lose their chances of cure and opportunities of consolation because, without seeing the fateful consequences, they refuse to accept either from the doctor[3] or the director of their conscience

[1] Quoted by Dr. L. Bouveret, *La Neurasthénie*, chap. iv. Paris, Baillière, 1891.

[2] Letter 361.

[3] When we speak of obedience, it will be understood that we refer to its practice with doctors who are really worthy of their noble profession. Unfortunately there are some who volunteer advice that they are not required to give. Without suspecting what a responsibility they take upon themselves, they encroach upon the duty of the director of conscience, and give their views on theology, Confession, Communion, and other subjects in which they are as incompetent as they are indiscreet.

On the other hand, under the pretext that patients require distraction, they can never see any danger in their going to balls, theatres, concerts, which keep them up till late at night. Then, of course, it is fatal if these patients attempt to rise at seven to hear Mass and receive Communion. This is especially when they endanger their

any advice that does not commend itself to their personal views.

They wish to live in their own way and to follow their own will. How many sick ones never even suspect that their complainings and their demands, which only increase the more as they are responded to with kindness, are calculated to try or to discourage their most devoted friends. They come eventually to feel that they have a right to everything and that everything must give way to their wants. The generosity and self-sacrifice of benefactors, the devotedness of doctors, the attentions given, even down to the most menial service, by nurses, and by those that will spend nights at their bedside—none of these things satisfy them. Some would require their relatives or friends to give their attention to them alone. They forget that charity does not exclude justice and that kindness must

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health. Such is assuredly a short-sighted policy to follow. It is not easy to understand how physicians, who must know better, can thus abuse the simple-mindedness of their patients or the easy-going ways of the relatives. It must be admitted by them that tranquillity and repose of soul and body are indispensable for the cure of neurosis.

If the patient must "honour the physician" (Ecclus. xxxviii. 1), the physician should also honour the patient by giving him his best care and encouragement. He ought to see in every sick person a suffering member of Jesus Christ, and a soul redeemed by His Precious Blood. It is his duty to announce to the sick man when there is any danger of death (Isa. xxxviii. 1), and he is the more bound to this duty when he is the only one capable of doing so. Again, he should ever bear in mind that "he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (St. James v. 20).

For all this a man must walk in the presence of God—he must be a man of faith.

never degenerate into weakness. To reason with such persons is only to exasperate them and to add to their ailment as long as they fail to see that sickness is a trial and that it is in and by this trial that God wishes to sanctify them.

In other cases, again, patients will break out into expressions or deeds that they bitterly regret as soon as the first impulse is over and they are able to render to themselves a clear account of what has occurred. Sometimes they suffer as much in causing pain as those whom they treat so badly. The thought of the offence will haunt them, and they will have no peace until they have repaired the evil by some sacrifice or humiliation. The words of St. Paul may well be applied to such: "For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do."[1] This state would seem to belong in a special way to those that suffer from hysteria. Wendell Holmes for this reason likened the hysterical person to a vampire that sucks the blood of those that have continually to deal with him or her.[2]

It is obvious that it is not easy to adopt one mode of treatment to all cases, because, besides time and patience and clear understanding of their state, that of the intensity of their pain, physical as well as mental, is requisite. At least, one can gauge the dreadful consequences of their affliction from their extraordinary and abnormal conduct. To treat them properly there must be great delicacy and

[1] Rom. vii. 19.

[2] Weir Mitchell, *Traitement Méthodique de la Neurasthénie.* Paris, Berthier.

unlimited kindness.[1] It does not suffice merely to go to them and to distract them by conversation. It is necessary to show them sentiments of lively sympathy and to speak to them the language of the heart rather than that of reason. One must try to lead them by persuasion rather than by conviction. Gentleness and thoughtfulness with little actions that only a tender charity can suggest will do far more than eloquent words or solid arguments.

Holy Writ expresses the value of such acts of charity by likening them to the kiss of the Soul (Prov. xxiv. 26). "Well-ordered words are as a honeycomb: sweet to the soul and health to the bones."[2] "The good word is better than the gift."[3]

"Kindness," says Father Faber, "has converted more sinners than either zeal, eloquence, or learning, and these three last have never converted anyone, unless they were kind also."[4]

"I have never," says St. Francis de Sales, "used sharp answers or words contrary to gentleness without having to repent. Men are won over by love rather than by severity. We should try to be not merely kind, but carry our kindness to a high degree."[5]

[1] "Kindness," says P. Lacordaire, "is that virtue which does not consult self-interest, which does not wait for the command of duty, nor has any need of being solicited by the attractiveness of beauty, but which the more readily inclines to an object as it is the more poor, wretched, abandoned, and contemptible" (*op. cit.*, t. iv., p. 312).

[2] Prov. xvi. 24.

[3] Ecclus. xviii. 16. "The tongue of the wise is health" (Prov. xii. 18).

[4] *Op. cit.*

[5] *Life*, by M. Hamon. See also *Introduction to the Devout Life*, part iii., chaps. viii. and ix., and Letters 578, 730, 854, 865.

Mgr. Landriot writes: " If ever you suffer and have wounds in your heart or deep down in the inmost recesses of your soul, seek out a sure and faithful friend and discover to him these secret sores hidden from public notice. From his heart of love will flow drops of consolation into yours, and this will act as a heavenly elixir to heal you. You will take in this balm and allow it to sink into the inmost fibres of your being, you will cover up those open wounds, and when you are alone again you will find a sensible easing of your pain. So shall you experience the fulfilment of that word of Holy Scripture: 'A faithful friend is the medicine of life.' "[1]

Dr. D. de M., a victim of nervous trouble, expresses in these terms his appreciation of sympathy shown him by many friends: " Ever since man has existed and suffered, the expression of pity has been one of his greatest helps. Pity often brings him solace through a glance, a gentle pressure of the hand, a mere phrase or kindly exclamation. All this often does more good than all the ingredients that we boil or pound or grind." " There is not a doctor," he continues, " but is fully convinced of this fact; there is none but meets with occasions for applying this remedy of heart and spirit, a remedy that cannot be formulated, but comes from inspiration born of the need of the moment, and from the very nature of the situation."[2]

That trivial influence of which kindness is one of the chief characteristics has been made use of by all

[1] Ecclus. vi. 16. *Les Péchés de la Langue et la Jalousie.* Second Conference. Paris, V. Palmé, 1870.

[2] Dechambre, *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique des Sciences Médicales.* Art. *Maladies Nerveuses*, 1878.

who study the means of healing. It lies at the very foundation of the treatment of nervous ailments.

Dr. Dubois again says: "There is no sickness in which the doctor, who has also a knowledge of psychology, may not find occasion to use his moral influence, either to remove false impressions or to brace up his patient with a serious or playful word of encouragement. To bring a smile into the countenance of the sick person is often the best means of dissipating those troubled states of mind that proceed from corporal afflictions. The good physician does, perhaps, more good by his word than by his prescriptions. The doctor must not be merely a learned man practising a sort of vivisection on his patient. He must have feeling enough to be able to put himself into the condition of the sufferer. He must be a friend and speak as with fellow-feeling. . . . But if," he continues, "what is called psychotherapy, be useful in the treatment of all patients, it becomes necessary when affections exclusively of a mental kind are to be dealt with.

"I know this is not a universal opinion, and that some continue to use common methods of treatment. But I have often made observations on the failure of these attempts of merely physical therapeutics, and have recognized the more clearly the efficacy of mind-power to recover the lost ground. I consider that the remedy for nervous afflictions is above all to be found in direct psychotherapy.

"It is necessary that the patient should feel that his doctor does not merely see in him a client, or even an interesting case, but a friend who thinks only of restoring to health.

"We medical men must give evidence to our patient of such lively and absorbing sympathy that he may feel disappointment for our sakes at not improving in health. In his daily familiar conversations the doctor must not try to select beforehand the text of what one might call a lay sermon. He must set himself down beside his patients to listen to their griefs with all possible patience.

"Above all, he must not be in a hurry, or, at all events, he must not let it be seen that he is. The doctor who rushes in, looks at his watch, and talks of his numerous occupations, is not capable of carrying out this psychological treatment. It should rather be that the patient might almost be led to believe that he is the only one to take up the doctor's attention, and thus feel encouraged to give him his confidence. Let your patient talk, and do not interrupt him even when he gets prolix or diffuse. Both you and he are interested in studying the state of his mind and laying bare his mental defects.[1] Show the patient clearly, by means of examples sometimes, the dangers of a diseased sensitiveness. . . .

"Endeavour to find out the moral qualities and any good points in your patient, and commend him for these, so as to raise his own idea of himself: one of his chief needs is to regain self-confidence.

[1] In view of what the doctor says, what is to be thought of consultations lasting only two or three minutes, when the patient has to say very little or nothing at all, on the pretext that the doctor knows his state perfectly. If under this treatment cures do take place, they are certainly not as rapid as the interviews. There is reason to ask how doctors can square their conscience with this mode of practice.

"Thus," concludes the writer, "it is necessary from the outset to gain control over the patient and to fill him with the idea that he is going to be cured. Then one must strive to keep up this idea to the end, bringing ever stronger reason to support the conviction. In fine, throughout the treatment the physician must study the mentality of his subject, refute his false reasoning, and his exaggerated readiness to take in suggestions. In this manner he will, in his daily interviews, modify the patient's actual state of mind, for it is in this state that is to be found the primary cause of the whole evil."[1]

Professor Raymond, in one of his excellent *Leçons Cliniques*, delivered at the hospice of the Salpêtrière, gives some very thoughtful advice to his pupils: "One must first of all avoid," he says, "giving the patient the impression that he is regarded as a *malade imaginaire*, as too many doctors do, with the very commendable intention of lessening the fears of the sick person. Nervous subjects are not of this kind, but they are sufferers whose complaint it is difficult to recognize. It is true that they often exaggerate and aggravate their ailment by giving it too much attention. The physician can succeed in making them realize this exaggeration if he takes the proper steps. His duty is to encourage them, to explain to them that their nervous disorder is functional and not organic. He must point out how undesirable and even dangerous it is for them to give themselves up to constant reflection on their illness, and make them grasp the necessity of voluntary effort in order that the treat-

[1] *Op. cit.*, leçons xviii. and xix.

ment may be continuous and efficacious. Every effort must be exerted to impress upon the patient the conviction that he is perfectly curable, to make him see that he is lacking in self-reliance, that he is wrong in supposing he can do so little of himself. And, finally, one must show by facts rather than by reasoning that an amelioration is already taking place."[1]

"The physician," says Dr. Deschamps, "must be well informed, patient, and kind, and full of pity. He must express himself clearly, sincerely, and simply. . . . He has one essential part to play: that is, to be the faithful, friendly guide and impartial director of the 'neurasthenic.' He has to teach him how to understand himself and to make the best use possible of the defective powers nature has endowed him with. . . . It is for him to teach with kindness how the patient is to bear himself in sickness."[2]

It is obvious that if this treatment were not applied with all prudence, charity, and firmness at times, it might result in disaster.

We knew one who was troubled with vague symptoms of nervous depression, and who went to consult a well-known medical man. "You have nothing whatever the matter with you," this doctor said; "do just whatever you like: if you wish to stay in bed altogether, do so." The suggestion was taken and acted upon the very next day, and for several months this person kept her bed and refused to do anything that was not agreeable to her. After some time she refused food—as it tired her to

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 29. [2] *Op. cit.*, 2[e] partie, ch. préliminaire.

eat. As may be imagined, she was soon reduced to a state of extreme weakness, which might have had very serious consequences. The relatives took alarm in good time, and had her removed to a hospital for special cases, and there she was gradually cured both of false ideas and neurosis.

It is to be hoped that these remarks may be of service to the inexperienced or imprudent and to friends and relatives of nervous subjects. We would also recommend to all that have charge of such patients to confine themselves to their proper sphere—to see that the doctor's injunctions are faithfully carried out, and not, under pretext of experience or superior knowledge, to criticize or condemn the doctor's diagnosis or treatment in the hearing of patients.

All these various points are of capital importance. Though they do not come directly within the scope of this work it has been thought well to quote them here, as our one object is to advance the interests of those who are afflicted. We should not have insisted so much on the psychical aspect of the matter if we had not ourselves experienced the happy effects, especially in the company of a good Jesuit Father of North Germany. Though he was himself afflicted with a complaint from which he knew no respite, he always retained his brightness of spirit in spite of it. By geniality, kind words, and a never-failing charity he was able to give comfort to many a victim of neurosis, to dispel their fears, and instil courage and calm into their souls by leading them on to greater confidence in themselves. It is well known that Mgr. Kneipp excelled in applying this

treatment. His part was considerable in the many cures that were wrought on patients that came to his foundation. He has been called "a genius of the first order" in this class of work.[1]

From what we have said, however, it is not to be supposed that the psychical treatment alone is sufficient. The physical is equally necessary. The essential matter is to know how to work both together and give to each the importance it deserves, according to the particular case. "Psychotherapy," says Professor F. Raymond, "is not the only element of treatment (of nervous cases), but it is an essential one and indispensable for any successful result."[2] To succeed, then, in the application of this difficult art, not only are special studies requisite, but these must be accompanied by a deep knowledge of human nature, as well as by a fund of patience and kindness. The practice of psychotherapy cannot be improvised. If badly applied, the treatment will only tend to aggravate the evil. Patience and charity—these are essential in order to ensure good results in the treatment of the afflicted, by giving them a true idea of themselves and encouraging to an exercise of good-will. This charity is like the wine and oil used by the Good Samaritan to relieve the wounded man on the road to Jericho.

Charity will teach us to love not in word only, but in deed and in truth.[3] Herein lies the true test of charity. "When," says the Abbé J. Guibert, "the sister of charity tenderly dresses the wounds of the

[1] Dr. F. Sandoz, *Introduction à la Thérapeutique Naturiste par les Agents Physiques et Diététiques*, chap. iii. Paris, Steinheil, 1907. A most interesting work.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 34.

[3] 1 John iii. 18.

body, she does but half her task, unless at the same time with words of kindness she soothes the troubles of the soul. Thus kindness of heart completes charity—it is the condiment needed to give a savour to the external benefit."[1]

With these considerations before us we may say with an old author: For the rest of our days let us have none but respectful feelings for the ways of the Cross—ways that are painful to nature, humiliating in the sight of men, but rich in the order of grace and all-glorious before God and His angels. Let us declare ourselves once for all on the side of our Divine Master. With Him let us esteem as blessed those who are calumniated, of whom all kind of evil is spread abroad, who, hated, persecuted, rejected, must dwell amidst weeping and tears. Let us with the Divine Spirit judge that it is better to go to the house of tears than of joy. Let persons, places, dwellings that bear the sign of the Cross, be for us objects of veneration. With reason do we respect the representation of the Cross in wood or on paper; with greater reason shall we reverence its living representations—the afflicted followers of Christ. If we chance to enter those abodes which the world regards as wretched—where we find families in misery, where we hear only wailing and sobbing, where we look upon nothing but poverty and want—there let us pause with respect. Let us recall that these places are the Louvres and the palaces of God. And have not our hospitals, the homes of sickness and sorrow, the

[1] *On Kindness*, chap. ii. An excellent little work that cannot be too highly recommended.

privilege of being named the "Hôtels de Dieu"?—a privilege quite peculiar to them.

Oh! What happiness there is in the Cross! If we should find a person entirely rejected by the world, who knew not which way to turn, who was deserted and contradicted by good and bad alike, thrown over by relatives and dearest friends; who became the laughing-stock and sport of companions, who was brought to the last extremity by the loss of goods, honour, and everything that satisfies sense, out of reverence for so saintly a state we should be moved to fall down and kiss the ground upon which he walked. Because in truth the Cross merits special veneration wheresoever it is found.

If we look upon our adorable Jesus, the Divine Model, we shall see that He goes before those rough men who seized Him. He treats them with all civility, simply because they came to lead Him to His Cross. So let us receive with deep respect every cross that comes to us; let us even sometimes go to meet our cross with joy; let us venerate the cross in ourselves, in our neighbour—in a word, wherever it may come under our notice. Indeed, passing the dwellings of the afflicted, one might well pause in reverence and bare the head whilst the soul were steeped in holy recollection."[1]

The foregoing considerations constitute a serious condemnation of fastidiousness and self-seeking, and in this connection we may recall the fact that even the pagans were able to see something sacred in the afflicted—*Res sacra miser!*

[1] Boudon, *Les Saintes voies de la Croix*, lib. iv., chap. iv. Paris, Perisse, 1876.

If, indeed, we are bound to love our neighbour "as ourselves," does it not follow that there is even a stricter duty towards those cases that we have been considering? They are suffering members of Jesus Christ. As such they claim our pitying attention, words of encouragement, and those little considerations which solace, console, and fortify. At the sight of the sufferer we must be moved to act upon those inspiriting words of Our Lord: "As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."[1]

It is, then, for Christ's sake that we must respect and love these sufferers who often are without light and moral energy; whose strength is paralyzed by their affliction, and who are so frequently beset with every sort of scruple. We must practise neighbourly love towards them by devoting ourselves to them, or at least by proving a real interest in them.

[1] Matt. xxv. 40.

CHAPTER VII

THE BRIGHT WAY OF THE CROSS

I. THE CHRISTIAN AND THE CROSS.

MOST men live as though they had never to die. Is it merely a natural instinct which makes them so tenacious of life? Or may it not, at least, in part be explained by that passion for pleasure which binds them to the earth where they are ever in hope of new pleasures, often only sensual ones, at least when there are no family ties to ennoble them?

Are these material and animal pleasures worth a feeling of regret, seeing that the higher faculties have so small a share in them and those nobler sentiments elevated by faith are excluded by them? Do they merit any remembrance at all when the end of life is at hand, since life is given as a trial and as a means of learning to know God, "the way, the truth, and the life"?

There is something strange in the fact that whereas man has a great horror of suffering, and banishes the thought and the sight of it so as not to interrupt his enjoyments, he is ever ready to say he prefers to suffer than to die. *Plutôt souffrir que mourir!* [1]

And this is not the sentiment of those only who are swayed merely by instinct. The philosopher

[1] La Fontaine.

who has come to have a contempt of life through having proved its emptiness, after years spent in forgetfulness of God, expresses much the same feeling—" Le soleil ni la mort ne se peuvent regarder fixement."[1]

Suffering and death are indeed bitter terms to him who has no faith. They are hard also for Christians who act as though they had not faith, and for those who are terrified at the shadow of pain, and who, as Bossuet says, expect to save their souls amongst the delights of this life. " Delicateness," he adds, " has become an art: people affect it even more than they really feel it. It is the *air de qualité*, distinguishing them from the vulgar. They affect a scrupulous care in shunning the slightest inconveniences, and this serves as the sign that they have been brought up in a more refined manner. What a corruption of Christian life! Can you ever claim salvation without having the character of your Saviour stamped upon you? Have you never heard the Apostle St. Peter telling you that He has *suffered* so much in order that you may follow His example and tread in His footsteps?"[2]

Then, what is gained by trying to escape pain? Infancy has its happy days but also its weeping. As age advances there are other pleasures, but also daily troubles. Youth has hardly found out the beauties of life when old age comes, which finds its only joy in the remembrance of its past. The whole of a human career is fraught with miseries moral and physical, with losses, with sufferings that are

[1] La Rochefoucault.
[2] Sermon on the necessity of suffering.

constant and at times almost intolerable. And this applies with greater force to those afflicted ones whom we are considering in these pages. For all such sufferers there is only this alternative—to suffer in a Christian spirit with resignation, or to revolt against the pain and Him Who sends it. Those who have no faith choose the latter course. So it is that we have our much-vaunted writers who are not content with blaming nature, but blaspheme God, and their blasphemies are by some regarded as a sublime expression of generous indignation.

Bossuet said of those who live thus without the support of faith: "The goods of this life have been withdrawn from them and they deprive themselves of the goods of the life to come. They are without hope on every side, and filled with rage and despair, they lift up their insolent voice against God in murmurs and blasphemy."[1]

There is nothing of all this lamentable disposition in the true Christian under trial of suffering. Whilst it is true, as the *Imitation* remarks, that there are few who are improved by suffering, it must be recognized that pain, when patiently accepted, does purify and refine the soul, as fire gold; and if in suffering we can expiate our faults, by its means also we can impress upon ourselves the character of our Saviour.

Nothing is more comforting than the thought of the sufferings sought and willingly accepted by the Divine Master. He came to ennoble poverty, to sanctify humiliation, and make spirit triumph over

[1] Sermon on the necessity of suffering.

the flesh. He gave to pain an advantage over good health. He showed how the spirit of self-sacrifice can conquer human selfishness, the cause of all our miseries.

It is in the school of that Cross whereon Jesus bore the worst of all sufferings—complete abandonment—that the Saints have been formed. After the Master's example, they have willingly accepted and even looked for hardships and humiliation, as, to mention one example, the great St. Bernard, who constantly studied his favourite book of the Cross, and learned "to tread under foot the scorn of the world."[1] One may read in St. Bernard's life how the science of the Cross trains the Christian spirit and how the preaching of the Cross begets Apostles. "In St. Bernard the Christian and apostolic life sprung from his knowledge of Christ crucified." After having despised the world and contemned all its delights, after having sought out a place of retreat and penance wherein to mortify his senses, living only on oaten bread and vegetables and sleeping on hard boards, then he began to act as an Apostle and inspired his own father and brothers with a love of the Cross, though they had been ever accustomed to command and to live amidst the tumult of arms. He taught his sister also to be ashamed of using the patrimony of the poor for her own adornment, though she had been always brought up in luxury and ease. He taught the

[1] "When one has suffered much," says Madame Swetchine, "one is like a master of many languages—able to understand all and to make others understand" (Le Comte de Falloux, *Madame Swetchine*, t. ii., Airelles, p. 8. Paris, Perrin).

science of the Cross, too, to the "seven hundred angels" of his monastery, and his influence over the whole of Europe made him come to be regarded as the leader of the Christian world. His one theme of teaching was the Cross of Jesus, and, as Bossuet adds, "that self-denial from which we all shrink with horror. We are fond of good fare, easy and pleasant living, and withal we still wish to be called Christians."[1]

With the eloquent panegyrist it must be admitted that those cannot be real Christians who avoid all pain, study personal comfort and the gratification of sense, or who, being called to travel by the hard road of self-immolation, are irritated, angered, and murmur against these trials that are ordained to beautify and purify the soul.[2] Besides, it is not the Gospel only, but the world and nature as well, that impose upon us the law of suffering. Hence, from every point of view, it is useless to kick against the goad, and only reasonable to accept with faith the affliction which in any case will try and disturb and crucify us. St. Catherine of Genoa says: "In this world God establishes a purgatory in the bodies of sick persons."

[1] Panegyric on St. Bernard.

[2] "We must not only be willing for God to strike us," says St. Francis de Sales, "but we must let Him strike us as He wills. . . . It may be in temporal things. God must be allowed to lay His hand upon thee as He thinks fit. Upon whatever chord of our lute He strikes, He will not fail to produce sweet harmony. Lord Jesus, without reserve, without *if* or *but*, without any exception or limitation, Your holy will be done on father, mother, or child in all and through all. I do not say you must not pray for their conversion: but you must not say to God: Leave me *this* or take *that*" (Letter 745).

St. Jerome relates that a solitary of the desert urged the holy Abbot John to heal him of a fever, and the Abbot replied: "You want to give up what is very needful to you; for as medicines purify the body, corporal afflictions chasten the soul."[1]

A pious legend relates how St. Petronilla spent a long period in most cruel suffering. During that time few sick people had recourse to the Apostle St. Peter in vain. St. Titus, who wondered that the Apostle did nothing for the benefit of St. Petronilla, ventured to ask St. Peter why this might be. The Apostle answered, "Because her affliction is useful to her."

"Almost the only good thing we are capable of in this life," says St. Francis de Sales, "is to suffer, because seldom do we perform any good act without mixing up some evil with it. . . . And then our Lord is never so close to us as when we are in affliction and bear it patiently for love of Him. . . . Blessed are they who are crucified in this way! In this world our lot is to partake of the Cross, in the next world it shall be to have our share of glory. . . . Let us love our crosses, for they are really golden when we regard them with the eyes of love."[2]

II. How to Consider Death.

If we shrink even from the idea of suffering, what is our attitude not only when face to face with the reality of death, but even in reflecting upon it?

It is not only in youth the apprehension of the great day is felt, nor is it only those who find them-

[1] *Vitiæ Patrum.*

[2] *Lettres*, 707 and 825.

selves in the midst of happiness here. They who having tasted of the joys and miseries of life feel life declining, and are forced to recognize that soon all will be at an end for them, are equally afraid, unwilling, and regretful at leaving the world. The true Christian suffers himself to be taken by God when his time arrives as naturally as the ripe fruit is gathered from the tree. He has studied the emptiness of this world, and can say with the great Christian preacher: "How small is the place we occupy here below! I am nothing. I have been sent here only as one of a vast number, and I might have been left out; the piece would have been played equally well if I had been kept behind the scenes."

How few think thus of this perishable life! How few give themselves any length of time to prepare for the journey that is so fearful to him who tries to keep death out of his view and who so soon forgets those who go before him! And if at times in the course of life there passes through the mind of these hardened men "a fleeting thought of preparing themselves for death, they soon banish these morbid notions; and we may say that the average mortal has no less care to bury all thoughts of death than to inter the bodies of the dead."[1]

It must be recognized that one of the most difficult problems to solve is that the supernatural should, generally speaking, have so little hold on men's lives. The difficulty is the greater in the case of those who are in a special manner pledged to the practice of the evangelical virtues. Seeing that all men are fully aware that they are here only for a

[1] Bossuet, *Sermon sur la Mort*.

while and that they may find themselves precipitated into Eternity when least they think of it, and there find themselves with nothing but the merit of their good works to commend them, how comes it that they live as though they were never to die or as though they had control of death and could fix a time to begin to prepare for their appearance before their God ?

A very natural answer to this will be that we cannot always be thinking of death and Eternity. That is true. But there is a vast difference between *always* thinking of it and thinking of it as little as men ordinarily do. Often, indeed, the only result of thinking or speaking of death is to intensify the attachment to this life. It is thought natural enough that someone else should depart this life, but nothing more unlikely than that we should. So-and-so died of old age, we think, another of some disease, and a third as the result of some negligence —all cases against which we feel perfectly secure. The worldling recovers from his alarm and throws himself again into his pleasures. The student will perhaps say, " Sic transit "—so pass all things away. The believer will say a short prayer, but all alike take up their ordinary course of life again, perhaps with a greater sense of security, as though they had obtained a certificate of long life.

Only the thorough Christian, the supernatural person, will draw any practical conclusion from the thought of death. He will pray for the soul of the departed and then turn his thoughts upon himself and renew his resolve to regard the preparation for death as a matter of prime importance, and pray

God to preserve him from sudden and unprovided death.

What explanation can be offered of this strange attitude amongst Christians and amongst those people whose business leaves them no time or opportunity to think of death ?

In spite of it all, the many ties which bind them to the earth must be broken, and probably the stroke that severs them will be all the more painful for having been previously disregarded. There are, however, careful souls who accustom themselves to the thought of death in order to regulate their lives and to judge of present things according to their true value. Others, no doubt, after setting aside the thought for a long period, come at last to accept with resignation this last terrible trial.

We must conclude that it would be vain to live under any delusion as to the duration of our term in this world. And when the end approaches we must be only too willing to accept the benefit and consolation of the encouragement, spoken to us by the pious and sincere friend who warns us of our danger, and thereby assists the soul to undertake bravely that passage so terrible to some, so full of hope and blessing for others.

CONCLUSION

IF all poor sufferers for whom we have written these pages will bring themselves to realize thoroughly the value of cheerfully accepted affliction and of a truly Christian death, which is the fitting close of a meritorious life, they will be far from imitating those unfortunates who vainly revolt against all pain and the thought of death. Dear souls, whose anguish we have experienced and shared, let us all unite to beg our Divine Lord to keep us secure from such a spirit of blindness and revolt.

We cannot detach our affections from this life and raise them to our Creator in the supernatural sphere without the succour of His grace, and this is all the more necessary if we are called upon to suffer. Let us beseech Him to make us see the inestimable worth of His Cross, humiliations, pains, and death by the Cross.

We will pray Him to preserve us from questioning the opportuneness, the sincerity, or the number of our trials, under the pretext that we have not been deserving of such bitter sorrow. Christ might say to us in this regard: Would you suffer only when you have offended? Does anyone ever commend or reward the generosity of the miser who pays his debts, and is there nothing to improve, chasten, perfect, and sanctify within your soul? Then look

at *Me.* What had I done to merit such torments? What was there to bring affliction upon Mary, My Mother, My Apostles, disciples, and all My friends, the Saints? "The disciple is not above the Master."[1] "Where I am there also shall My minister be."[2] Whosoever does not carry his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple."[3] "Through many tribulations you must enter into the Kingdom of God."[4] Consider, then, dear child, what fatigue, exhaustion, and weakness I suffered: think how the burning love I bore you drew from Me even My life. Now it is My pleasure to give you a share in My own pains. Look well upon the many signs of love that I have borne for you; witness the many wounds that love has left in Me, and think much upon My Passion and death. In this way your soul shall become united with God and return again to the source of its being.[5]

On the other hand, if our crosses are sent to us by reason of our sins, we must thank God for them. Better is it to atone for our sins now than in the next world. If they come upon us to manifest in us the works of God, we shall gain so much the more for our spiritual advancement, perfection, and sanctification.

Jesus Christ has shown by word and example that there is nothing more useful to man than the Cross.[6] And this is what He has bestowed upon His best friends, the Saints. And in the same way He seems to say to us all: "My children, rejoice, and in

[1] John xiii. 16. [2] John xii. 26.
[3] Luke xiv. 27. [4] Acts xiv. 21.
[5] Tauler. [6] *Imitation*, bk. ii., chap. xii. 15.

your troubles turn your eyes and your thoughts to Me. My home was barren and I disdained not to live poor and desolate in this world. I underwent much pain and endured amongst men the sorrows of the Cross. Come, then, as valiant and resolute soldiers, summon up all your strength and ardour,[1] take up your Cross and follow Me,[2] for no one shall be crowned except he strive lawfully."[3]

We cannot but know with certainty that a large measure of pain means for us a full share of glory. We may securely apply to ourselves this passage of Holy Writ: "One of the ancients answered, and said to me: These that are clothed in white robes, who are they? and whence came they? And I said to him: My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me: These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple: and He, that sitteth on the throne, shall dwell over them. They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."[4]

Just as a traveller ascending a high mountain sees constantly new landscapes of ravishing beauty open out before his view, so in the school of the Cross, as we advance we discover new lights and

[1] Blessed H. Suso.
[2] Matt. xvi. 24.
[3] 2 Tim. ii. 5.
[4] Apocalypse vii. 13-17.

beauties which we never could have dreamed of, and which would be sought in vain elsewhere. By the agency of grace, which flows in upon pure hearts, our sufferings, infirmities, and weaknesses will become like so many openings which allow the light of God to penetrate our souls, to brighten, to warm, and to cleanse them more and more.[1]

Grace is always proportioned to difficulties. And if we are faithful to it, we can learn to love the Cross, to bless it, and to thank the Divine Master for inviting us to follow Him amongst the real friends of God.

St. Theresa was once speaking to Our Lord concerning the great sufferings with which He visited her, and Our Lord said to her, "Thus it is that I treat My friends." "Then," replied the Saint, "I am not astonished that You have so few friends."

In a word, our crosses cannot be undervalued when we know that they will inspire us with that knowledge of this world and the next which is the distinguishing wisdom of the Saints, and will guide us by the same path to the reward of the Saints. If we realize that God is favouring us in a mysterious manner, and if He sends at the same time clearer lights upon this life, which for so many is only a hopeless riddle, we shall no longer have any great horror of pain. We shall be prepared for the cross to come and shall know how to endure it with tranquillity, if not with actual joy. Thus it was that a chosen soul whom the writer knew

[1] "As the body sinks, the soul rises on high," said Père Lacordaire. He meant that as the body is detached from false attractions, the soul is able to purify itself, to enter into the supernatural and aspire only after eternal good.

and loved was able to write only a few days before his death: "Let suffering come upon me, and sacrifice and humiliation, and death itself, if that is at hand. I accept beforehand all the crosses that Providence may wish to lay upon me. In all I recognize the hand of God sending me trials as well as His grace, trouble as well as hope, bitterness as well as sweetness. But for me that Hand is full of mercy and help, ever loved and ever blessed." His last words were: "I will all that God wills."[1]

[1] Edmond Rocca, who died at Marseilles, September 9, 1893, at the age of nineteen. It was from a saintly home that this youth had learned and had preserved his angelic virtue. In his case it might well be said: "Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time. For his soul pleased God: therefore He hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquities" (Wisd. iv. 13, 14).

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